

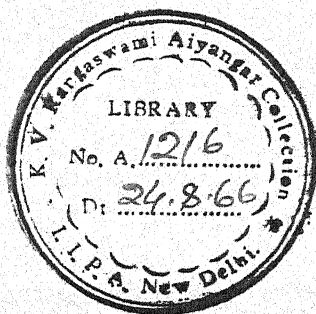
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Essays and Aphorisms

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Essays and Aphorisms,  
by Sir Arthur Helps. With  
an Introduction.



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## SIR ARTHUR HELPS.

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ARTHUR HELPS was born at Balham Hill, Surrey, in 1813. He was the fourth and youngest son of Thomas Helps, who was head of a large mercantile house in the city of London. His mother was the only surviving child of John, the fourth son of the Rev. Charles Plucknett, of Wincanton. Though his father was an able and successful man of business, he does not appear to have possessed any literary tastes, whereas his mother was for her day a remarkably cultivated woman. She was an accomplished linguist and a great reader, and, what was quite as uncommon in a woman of those days, a skilful chess-player.

In his early years Arthur Helps was rather delicate. He was a precocious boy, and at eight years of age he could read Greek. He went to a preparatory school at Balham, and afterwards to Eton with his elder brother. At Eton he was known as a quiet, studious boy, to whom the rougher games did not appeal, though he was fond of riding and fishing. He retained his liking for the former till late in life, and was a fearless though careless rider. He was one of the founders of the school magazine, which numbered amongst its contributors many boys distinguished in after life. From Eton he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, taking his B.A. degree in 1835 (when he came out thirty-first wrangler in the mathematical tripos) and his M.A. in 1839. His health was not robust whilst at the University, which may in part account for his not having taken higher honours, as also the fact that he seems to have devoted himself to general reading

rather than to special studies. He was, however, greatly interested in optics, which he studied under Phelps, a life-long friend, afterwards master of Sidney Sussex College. Whilst at Cambridge he made his first literary effort, and published *Thoughts in the Cloister and the Crowd*, reflections and aphorisms on life, character, and conduct. That his ability and originality were recognised by his contemporaries is shown by the fact that he was elected a member of a society known as "The Apostles," which numbered among its members Alfred Tennyson, Frederick Maurice, Charles Butler, Richard Chevenix Trench, and Arthur Hallam. For Maurice, Arthur Helps had a very special admiration and affection.

On leaving Cambridge he became private secretary to Mr. Spring-Rice (afterwards Lord Monteagle), whose son had been among his intimate friends. Mr. Spring-Rice was Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Melbourne's administration. This appointment Helps held till 1840, when he went to Ireland as private secretary to Lord Morpeth, afterwards Earl of Carlisle, then Chief Secretary for Ireland. He remained in Ireland until the change of government in 1841, when Sir Robert Peel's ministry came into power. Subsequently he was appointed a commissioner for the settlement of Danish claims relating to the bombardment of Copenhagen. Upon the fall of Lord Melbourne's administration, he left official life, devoting himself entirely to literary work. In the troublous times of 1848 he, with Charles Kingsley and others, issued a series of papers called *Politics for the People*. He went out as a special constable, and afterwards published a letter, in which occurs a passage perhaps worth quoting in these days—"Any service, however, which could be imposed upon us is a slight thing compared with the evil, if we saw it in all its fulness, of living in want of harmony with any considerable portion of our fellow-citizens."

In 1836 he married Miss Bessie Fuller, daughter of Captain Edward Fuller by his marriage with Elizabeth Blennerhassett. Soon after his retirement from office he bought a house about four miles from Botley, on the South-Western Railway, known

as Vernon Hill—Admiral Vernon had lived there. The house is situated on a hill commanding the country stretching away to the Solent : on a clear day might be seen a silver streak of sea and the hills of the Isle of Wight. Facing the house, at about a mile's distance, lies a lake, near which stand the remains of Waltham Abbey, while on the left rise the roofs of the village of Bishop's Waltham. Here he occupied himself for many years with literary work, at the same time keeping in touch with sanitary and social work in London. He cultivated little local society, but made to himself many friends among his poorer neighbours and dependants, and busied himself in studying their condition. Among other things he set on foot a lending library for the villagers. Gardening, and the enlargement of his house, which was carried out so as to provide a corridor for exercise in wet weather, and to meet the requirements of his family now growing up, occupied his leisure. The planting and transplanting of trees especially interested him, and to this day flourishing plantations of fir and larch bear witness to his care and foresight. It was here that many of the walks recorded in *Friends in Council* took place in company with some of his guests, among whom may be mentioned Emerson, Kingsley, G. W. Lewes, John Hullah, Phelps, the Doyles, Coleridge, Charles Buller, and W. G. Clark, all of whom it was his delight to entertain in a quiet, homely fashion.

On the resignation of the Hon. W. L. Bathurst, in 1860, the Clerkship of the Privy Council was offered to him, on Lord Granville's recommendation, by Lord Palmerston, to whom he was introduced by Macaulay as "one of the ablest men of the day." This office he accepted and held until his death. In 1864 he received the honorary degree of D.C.L. from the University of Oxford, in 1871 he was made C.B., and in the following year K.C.B.

His growing interest in agriculture had led him to undertake farming on a small scale, and, later, the discovery of what was believed to be a valuable bed of clay induced him to embark in a commercial undertaking, which unfortunately

resulted in great loss to himself and those friends who had been associated with him in the enterprise. The anxieties connected with this affair had a serious effect upon his health for some time, and his losses obliged him to give up Vernon Hill. After a short residence at Croydon, the Queen offered him a house at Kew Gardens, where he lived until his death in 1875, greatly delighting in the Royal Gardens, in which he used often to stroll in friendly converse with the director, Sir Joseph Hooker, who became one of his most intimate friends. His death in 1875, at the comparatively early age of sixty-two, was due to a severe attack of pleurisy, resulting from a cold caught on a bleak March day in attending a *levée*.

Of Arthur Helps' official career little can be said here. As the permanent head of the Privy Council Office, which from its constitution is necessarily brought into relation with the great departments of state, he saw much of men and affairs. The fruits of his experience are embodied in such works as *Thoughts upon Government*. As Clerk of the Council he came into contact with the chief members of every administration, and among them he made many personal friends; of these one of the most intimate in later years was W. E. Forster. Though he had no very strong party bias he inclined to Liberalism, and was what was then called a Liberal-Conservative. He was treated with equal confidence by Lord Derby and Lord Russell, by Robert Lowe and Lord Carnarvon. During his term of office considerable additions were made to the statutory powers of the Privy Council Office. An outbreak of rinderpest led to the establishment of a supplementary office, for dealing with the infectious diseases of cattle, and, as chairman of the Transit of Animals Committee, he had the great satisfaction of initiating measures for regulating the carriage of animals by sea and land. These measures were afterwards adopted both at home and abroad, and have done much to lessen the suffering of cattle, and provide for their better treatment.

The performance of Arthur Helps' duties as Clerk of the Council necessarily brought him into personal communication

with the Queen and the Prince Consort, who both soon recognised and appreciated his chivalrous nature, and relied much upon his judgment. The following extract from an obituary notice in the *Times* may perhaps be quoted in this connexion. "No one had learnt to appreciate his qualities more highly than her Majesty. In her Clerk of the Council she always could reckon upon a staunch, thoughtful, and capable adviser, whose views had not been rashly arrived at, whose information was ample, and who had neither personal nor party interests to serve."

When her Majesty desired to make better known to her people the nature of the great loss she had sustained, she showed her reliance upon Arthur Helps' insight and judgment by asking him to undertake the editing of the Prince's speeches and addresses. His sketch of the Prince given in the preface to this work is, I believe, accepted as one of the best attempts, if not the best attempt, at depicting the character and aims of one of the most remarkable men of our time. In after years her Majesty entrusted to him the preparation for the press of *Leaves from our Journal in the Highlands*, a work which has done much to endear the Queen to her subjects throughout the empire. For many years Arthur Helps was honoured by being one of her Majesty's most trusted friends and counsellors. His position was in some respects unique, for not only was he personally acquainted with the leading men of all parties, but he moved in all sections of society from the Court downwards, and his advice was sought by men of the most opposite views. He enjoyed the friendship of Palmerston and of Disraeli, of Carlyle and of Dickens, of Frederick Maurice and of Norman Macleod.

In domestic life he was just, affectionate, and genial, often charming with bright flashes of playful humour. To dependants, by all of whom he was worshipped, he was ever courteous and considerate. As a host he had the art of making every one at ease, and of bringing out the best points of all. He delighted in the society of young people, and few sons can look back as his can upon their father's companionship as that of an infinitely



tender, wise, and sympathetic elder brother, always interesting, and always willing to be interested. He was by nature of a calm, studious, and reserved temperament. His reticence and reserve made him the recipient of all sorts of confidences. Many good stories might be told of his reserve. The following is characteristic. On the occasion of a change of ministry a certain high official was somewhat pompously informing him of the probable composition of the Cabinet. Sir Arthur responded with polite vague commonplaces, observing with a smile to his companion as the high official left the room, "I have the list here," putting his hand on his breast pocket. He was tolerant in all things but one—cruelty to animals. The sufferings inflicted on dumb creatures would rouse his wrath, exciting it to a white heat, and his language on such occasions was alarmingly forcible and impressive. Rounded periods of scathing denunciation would be hurled at the object of his wrath. Had a stranger been present at one of these outbursts, he would have formed an utterly wrong impression of his real nature. As all his readers know, war, large cities, foul dwellings, and competitive examinations were hateful to him; but, strong as his opinions were on these subjects, he rarely obtruded them in general conversation. He was himself scrupulously accurate in statement and impatient of inaccuracy in others. He had great powers of sarcasm, but his kindly nature rarely allowed him to use them, except playfully. His sense of humour and love of fun were both keen, and he could heartily enjoy any joke against himself levelled at his inconsistency in action or argument, or at his lack of artistic power. He was absolutely devoid of what some people call "proper pride," and he would arrive at a great house in the most squalid of cabs, and with the shabbiest luggage. In dress, appearance was entirely subordinated to comfort, and he always preferred clothes of the "baggy" order. He had an oriental liking for bright colours both in the house and in dress. He was utterly careless as to what he ate or drank. Music, as a rule of a simple, tuneful order, afforded him great pleasure, but he also appreciated classical music, which always threw him

into profound reveries. His active and vigorous mind found relief from one occupation in recourse to another ; and when wearied by the official and literary labour of the day, he would turn to a German novel or a scientific treatise. He was, as his books show, an omnivorous reader.

He displayed great ease and eloquence in speaking, and there is little doubt that had he gone into Parliament he would have made his mark. As Sir Theodore Martin truly says in his sympathetic notice of Sir Arthur Helps in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* :—"As an orator, a character for which he had many intellectual qualities, he could scarcely have failed to attain a high rank. He was himself not unconscious of his gifts in this direction ; but he was altogether of too fine a fibre for the hard hitting and the fiery struggle of the political arena, in which alone he would have coveted distinction. Wisely therefore he made for himself, as was well said by a friend at the time of his death, 'work of another sort, applying his gentle, ever busy mind to such discussion as purifies the thought, informs the pity, and confirms the forbearance of mankind.'"

To turn to his literary work, besides the early works already mentioned, in 1841 he wrote *Essays Written in the Intervals of Business*, probably the outcome of his experience as private secretary. In 1843 he brought out two historical plays, *Catherine Douglas* and *Henry II.* In 1844, in *The Claims of Labour*, is struck the note of all his most earnest and purposeful work. In these essays, which show the need of sanitary and political reform, and suggest remedial measures, he endeavoured to rouse the public conscience, and to interest the thinker in the condition of poor and suffering humanity. These aims are kept in view in many of his subsequent works, sometimes indirect methods being employed, as in *Oulita*, *Friends in Council*, *Realma*, and *Companions of my Solitude*; sometimes direct ones, as in *Essays on Organisation in Daily Life*, and *Thoughts on Government*, etc.

In 1845 another essay was added to *Claims of Labour*, entitled, "On the Means of Improving the Health and Increasing the Comfort of the Labouring Classes." In 1847 appeared

the work by which he is best known, *Friends in Council*, where he adopted the plan of submitting formal essays, chiefly on social and moral questions, to an imaginary coterie, whose names to readers of Sir Arthur's books are familiar as household words, by whom the essays are criticised and discussed. In following this plan he may be said to have introduced a new way of conducting controversy. A spirit of toleration and fairness, which, as may be seen by reference to the reviews and essays of that day, was often wanting, presided over these discussions, and the comparison of many points of view was obtained.

The subject of slavery had a peculiar interest for him. In the first series of *Friends in Council* several chapters are devoted to showing that it is "cruel, needless, and unauthorised." In *Conquerors of the New World* the events which led to the introduction of slavery in America are treated at some length, whilst in the *Spanish Conquest of America* the historical events which brought about the distribution of races in the New World are traced. This work, to which he devoted many years' labour, entailed much research and investigation into Spanish history, and necessitated two journeys to Spain to study MSS. and records at Madrid.

The book was not a success. It has been thought that the author's method of considering the evidence for or against any part of the narrative wearied the reader, accustomed to have his history set before him in no undecided manner, and that the habit of interrupting the story to analyse character, investigate motives, and philosophise, detracted from its literary merit. However that may be, the biographies of Las Casas, Columbus, Pizarro, and others, which were afterwards eliminated from the history and with very little amplification published separately, met with a favourable reception. In 1851 he had brought out *Companions of my Solitude*, in which some of his deepest and tenderest thought appears. In 1858 he wrote a tragedy called *Oulita, or the Serf*, in the author's opinion the best of his lighter works. In *Casimir Maremma* he employed fiction as a vehicle for conveying his views upon emigration ;

while in *Realmah*, an account of an imaginary kingdom of the bronze period, in depicting the life, religion, laws, and customs of a community of lake dwellers, social and political problems of our time, and leading men, are treated of under a thin disguise.

A second series of *Friends in Council* appeared in 1859. Beside the works already enumerated may be mentioned *Organisation in Daily Life*, *Conversation on War and General Culture*, *Brevia*, a collection of short essays and aphorisms, *Thoughts upon Government*, and the *Life and Labours of Mr. Brassey*. He also contributed occasionally to several leading magazines, and his pen was frequently enlisted to pay a last tribute to men of note, such as Lord Clarendon, Kingsley, and Dickens.

He had always felt deeply concerning the cruelties inflicted upon the lower animals by brutality and want of thought, and in 1873 he brought out *Animals and their Masters*, which covers nearly the whole field of our relations to, and responsibilities for domestic animals.

*Ivan de Brion*, a story of Russian life in the last century, is perhaps the only one of his works written without a purpose.

In 1875 appeared his last work, *Social Pressure*, in which he returns to many of the subjects dealt with in earlier writings.

To give an idea of the pains he took to secure accuracy, the following passage from a notice in the *Athenæum*, written by John Hullah, may be quoted :—"If there was ever a writer in reference to whom it could be said that genius and industry were convertible terms, it was he. No expenditure of toil or money did he ever allow to stand between him and a truth of whatever kind. Were the only copy of a manuscript at Simancas, to Simancas he would go ; were a book inaccessible save by purchase, he would buy it ; were it written in a language he did not know—bitter experience had given him an absolute distrust of translations—he would set to work to study that language. The world is so much accustomed to associate learning with dulness, that many of Sir Arthur Helps' most loving and constant readers will be as much surprised to find

the former of these qualities attributed to him as they would be the latter. Yet in the widest sense of the word he was one of the most learned men of his age. He was what is generally understood by an elegant if not a great scholar. He had the use, and was well read in the literatures, of four living languages besides his own. It would have been nearly impossible to begin a quotation in any one of these which he could not have finished."

It is perhaps worthy of mention that none of Sir Arthur Helps' works were written with his own hand. His practice was to dictate sometimes to an amanuensis, sometimes to a member of his family or to a friend pressed into the service, often pacing up and down his study smoking a cigarette. The mechanical work of writing seemed to interrupt the flow of thought. He rarely altered what he wrote, and he could dictate letters or articles on two entirely different subjects simultaneously. Of him it may be fitly said, "le style est l'homme même." His strongest convictions and most earnest desires, expressed with moderation and tolerance, stand revealed in his writings. The very simplicity of his style carries with it the stamp of sincerity. I cannot better conclude this brief sketch than by again quoting from Sir T. Martin :—"No man was more eager to do what he might towards obviating or curing the folly, stupidity, lethargy, and selfishness to which so much of the misery, the ill-health, the suffering, and the sin of the world is due."

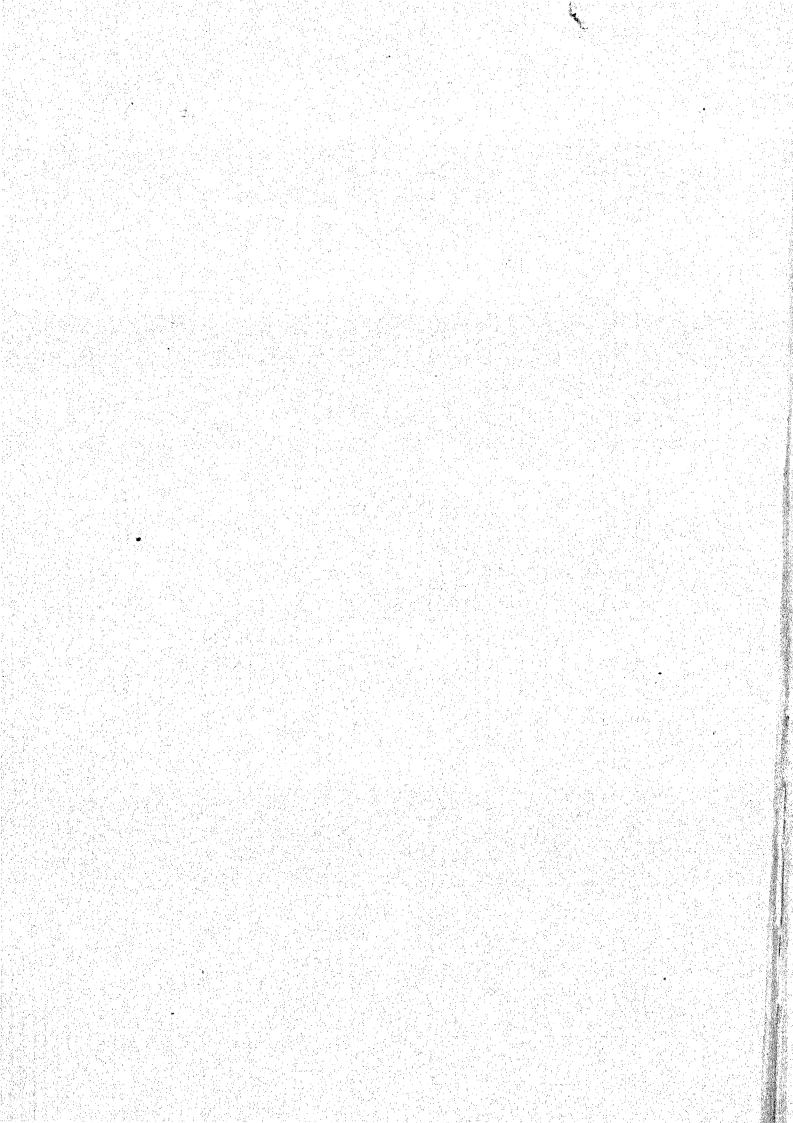
In regarding some of Sir Arthur Helps' writings on social questions, such as the *Claims of Labour*, of which the first two chapters have been chosen for this volume, as more directly bearing upon the questions of to-day than others, it is interesting to note how many of the reforms he advocated have been carried out—often on the lines he indicated—and how even the very words and phrases of his discourses have become part of the stock-in-trade of the social reformer. Many of the questions treated of in these works are still "burning"; among them one of the most painful and perplexing problems of life in great cities—that referred to in *Companions of my Solitude*—

remains unsolved. But the remedies which he suggested more than forty years ago are in accord with much of the best of modern thought on this subject.

It is hoped that this volume may create a desire to become better acquainted with the works of a writer who was a pioneer in the army of social reformers, and one of the thinkers concerning whom Ruskin (*Modern Painters*, iii. p. 268) has written—"a true thinker, who has practical purpose in his thinking, and is sincere, as Plato, or Carlyle, or Helps, becomes in some sort a seer, and must always be of infinite use in his generation."

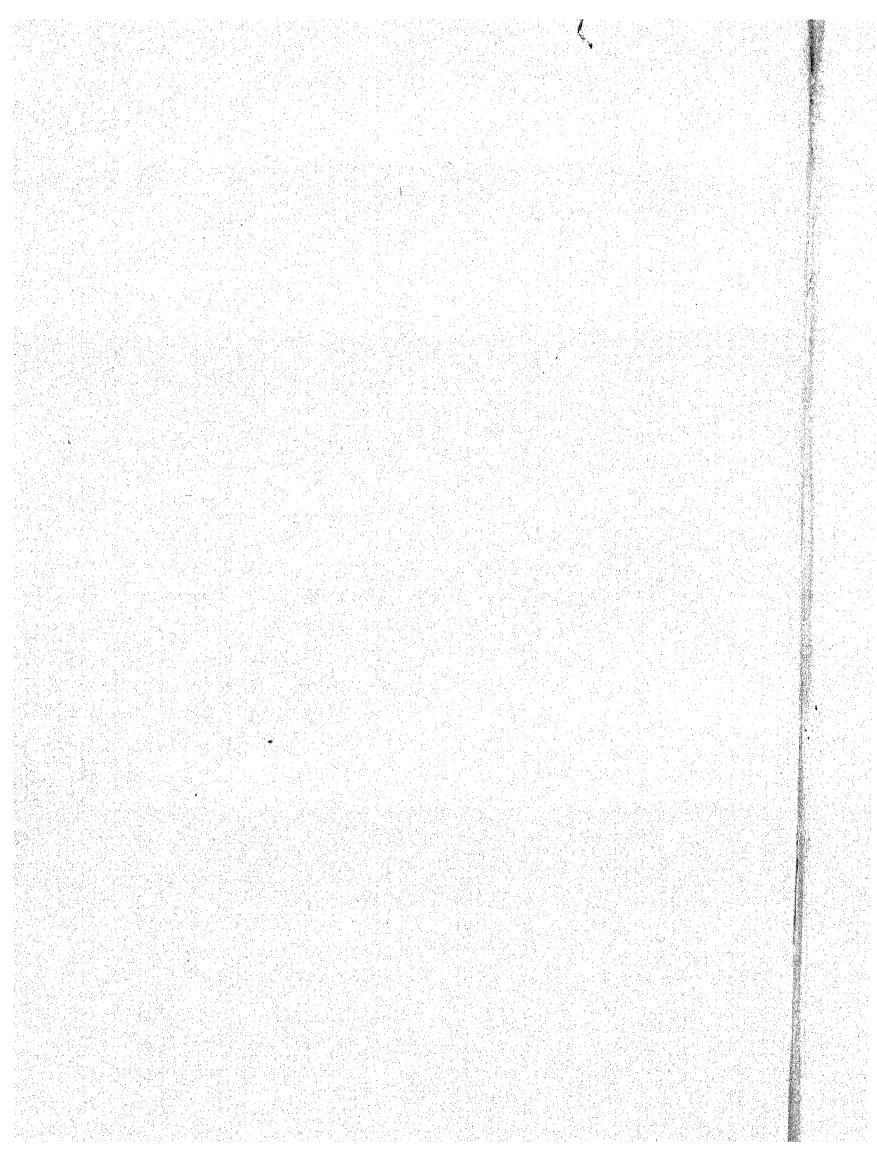
E. A. HELPS.

*November 1892.*



ESSAYS AND APHORISMS.





# ESSAYS.



## ON PRACTICAL WISDOM.

PRACTICAL wisdom acts in the mind, as gravitation does in the material world : combining, keeping things in their places, and maintaining a mutual dependence amongst the various parts of our system. It is for ever reminding us where we are, and what we can do, not in fancy, but in real life. It does not permit us to wait for dainty duties, pleasant to the imagination, but insists upon our doing those which are before us. It is always inclined to make much of what it possesses ; and is not given to ponder over those schemes which might have been carried on if what is irrevocable had been other than it is. It does not suffer us to waste our energies in regret. In journeying with it we go towards the sun, and the shadow of our burden falls behind us.

In bringing anything to completion, the means which it looks for are not the shortest, nor the neatest, nor the best that can be imagined. They have, however, this advantage, that they happen to be within reach.

We are liable to make constant mistakes about the nature of practical wisdom, until we come to perceive that it consists not in any one predominant faculty or disposition, but

rather in a certain harmony amongst all the faculties and affections of the man. Where this harmony exists, there are likely to be well-chosen ends, and means judiciously adapted. But, as it is, we see numerous instances of men who, with great abilities, accomplish nothing, and we are apt to vary our views of practical wisdom according to the particular failings of these men. Sometimes we think it consists in having a definite purpose, and being constant to it. But take the case of a deeply selfish person : he will be constant enough to his purpose, and it will be a definite one. Very likely, too, it may not be founded upon unreasonable expectations. The object which he has in view may be a small thing ; but being as close to his eyes as to his heart, there will be times when he can see nothing above it, or beyond it, or beside it. And so he may fail in practical wisdom.

Sometimes it is supposed that practical wisdom is not likely to be found amongst imaginative persons. And this is very true, if you mean by "imaginative persons" those who have an excess of imagination. For in the mind, as in the body, general dwarfishness is often accompanied by a disproportionate size of some part. The large hands and feet of a dwarf seem to have devoured his stature. But if you mean that imagination, of itself, is something inconsistent with practical wisdom, I think you will find that your opinion is not founded on experience. On the contrary, I believe that there have been few men who have done great things in the world who have not had a large power of imagination. For imagination, if it be subject to reason, is its "slave of the lamp."

It is a common error to suppose that practical wisdom is something Epicurean in its nature, which makes no difficulties, takes things as they come, is desirous of getting rid rather than of completing, and which, in

short, is never troublesome. And from a fancy of this kind many persons are considered speculative merely because they are of a searching nature; and are not satisfied with small expedients, and such devices as serve to conceal the ills they cannot cure. And if to be practical is to do things in such a way as to leave a great deal for other people to undo at some future and no very distant period—then, certainly, these scrutinising, painstaking sort of persons are not practical. For it is their nature to prefer a good open visible rent to a time-serving patch. I do not mean to say that they may not resort to patching as a means of delay. But they will not permit themselves to fancy that they have done a thing when they have only hit upon some expedient for putting off the doing.

Bacon says, "In this theatre of man's life, God and angels only should be lookers-on; that contemplation and action ought ever to be united, a conjunction like unto that of the two highest planets, Saturn the planet of rest, and Jupiter the planet of action." It is in this conjunction, which seems to Bacon so desirable, that practical wisdom delights; and on that account it is supposed by some men to have a tinge of baseness in it. They do not know that practical wisdom is as far from what they term expediency as it is from impracticability itself. They see how much of compromise there is in all human affairs. At the same time they do not perceive that this compromise, which should be the nice limit between wilfulness and a desertion of the light that is within us, is the thing of all others which requires the diligent exercise of that uprightness which they fear to put in peril, and which, they persuade themselves, will be strengthened by inactivity. They fancy, too, that high moral resolves and great principles are not for daily use, and that there is no room for them in the affairs

of this life. This is an extreme delusion. For how is the world ever made better? not by mean little schemes which some men fondly call practical, not by setting one evil thing to counteract another, but by the introduction of those principles of action which are looked upon at first as theories, but which are at last acknowledged and acted upon as common truths. The men who first introduce these principles are practical men, though the practices which such principles create may not come into being in the lifetime of their founders.

### AIDS TO CONTENTMENT.

THE first object of this essay is to suggest some antidotes against the manifold ingenuity of self-tormenting.

For instance, how much fretting might be prevented by a thorough conviction that there can be no such thing as unmixed good in this world! In ignorance of this, how many a man, after having made a free choice in any matter, contrives to find innumerable causes for blaming his judgment! Blue and green having been the only colours put before him, he is dissatisfied with himself because he omitted to choose pure white. Shenstone has worked out the whole process with fidelity. "We are oftentimes in suspense betwixt the choice of different pursuits. We choose one at last doubtingly, and with an unconquered hankering after the other. We find the scheme, which we have chosen, answer our expectations but indifferently—most worldly projects will. We therefore repent of our choice, and immediately fancy happiness in the paths which we decline; and this heightens our uneasiness. We might at least escape the aggravation of it. It is not improbable

we had been more unhappy, but extremely probable we had not been less so, had we made a different decision."

A great deal of discomfort arises from over-sensitiveness about what people may say of you, or your actions. This requires to be blunted. Consider whether anything that you can do will have much connection with what they will say. And besides, it may be doubted whether they will say anything at all about you. Many unhappy persons seem to imagine that they are always in an amphitheatre, with the assembled world as spectators; whereas, all the while they are playing to empty benches. They fancy, too, that they form the particular theme of every passer-by. If, however, they must listen to imaginary conversations about themselves, they might, at any rate, defy the proverb, and insist upon hearing themselves well spoken of.

Well, but suppose that it is no fancy; and that you really are the object of unmerited obloquy. What then? It has been well said, that in that case the abuse does not touch you; and if you are guiltless, it ought not to hurt your feelings any more than if it were said of another person, with whom you are not even acquainted. You may answer that this false description of you is often believed in by those whose good opinion is of importance to your welfare. That certainly is a palpable injury; and the best mode of bearing up against it is to endeavour to form some just estimate of its nature and extent. Measure it by the worldly harm which is done to you. Do not let your imagination conjure up all manner of apparitions of scorn, and contempt, and universal hissing. It is partly your own fault if the calumny is believed in by those who ought to know you, and in whose affections you live. That should be a circle within which no poisoned dart can reach you. And for the rest, for the injury done you in the world's

estimation, it is simply a piece of ill-fortune, about which it is neither wise nor decorous to make much moaning.

A little thought will sometimes prevent you from being discontented at not meeting with the gratitude which you have expected. If you were only to measure your expectations of gratitude by the extent of benevolence which you have expended, you would seldom have occasion to call people ungrateful. But many persons are in the habit of giving such a factitious value to any services which they may render, that there is but little chance of their being contented with what they are likely to get in return; which, however, may be quite as much as they deserve.

Besides, it is a common thing for people to expect from gratitude what affection alone can give.

There are many topics which may console you when you are displeased at not being as much esteemed as you think you ought to be. You may begin by observing that people in general will not look about for anybody's merits, or admire anything which does not come in their way. You may consider how satirical would be any praise which should not be based upon a just appreciation of your merits: you may reflect how few of your fellow-creatures can have the opportunity of forming a just judgment about you: you may then go further, and think how few of those few are persons whose judgment would influence you deeply in other matters: and you may conclude by imagining that such persons do estimate you fairly, though perhaps you never hear it.

The heart of man seeks for sympathy, and each of us craves a recognition of his talents and his labours. But this craving is in danger of becoming morbid, unless it be constantly kept in check by calm reflection on its vanity, or by dwelling upon the very different and far higher motives

which should actuate us. That man has fallen into a pitiable state of moral sickness, in whose eyes the good opinion of his fellow-men is the best of merit, and their applause the principal reward for exertion.

A habit of mistrust is the torment of some people. It taints their love and their friendship. They take up small causes of offence. They expect their friends to show the same aspect to them at all times; which is more than human nature can do. They try experiments to ascertain whether they are sufficiently loved: they watch narrowly the effects of absence, and require their friends to prove to them that the intimacy is exactly upon the same footing as it was before. Some persons acquire these suspicious ways from a natural diffidence in themselves; for which they are often loved the more: and they might find ample comfort in that, if they could but believe it. With others, these habits arise from a selfishness which cannot be satisfied. And their endeavours should be to uproot such a disposition, not to soothe it.

Contentment abides with truth. And you will generally suffer for wishing to appear other than what you are; whether it be richer, or greater, or more learned. The mask soon becomes an instrument of torture.

Fit objects to employ the intervals of life are among the greatest aids to contentment that a man can possess. The lives of many persons are an alternation of the one engrossing pursuit, and a sort of listless apathy. They are either grinding, or doing nothing. Now to those who are half their lives fiercely busy, the remaining half is often torpid without quiescence. A man should have some pursuits which may be always in his power, and to which he may turn gladly in his hours of recreation.

And if the intellect requires thus to be provided with



perpetual objects, what must it be with the affections? Depend upon it, the most fatal idleness is that of the heart. And the man who feels weary of life may be sure that he does not love his fellow-creatures as he ought.

You cannot hope for anything like contentment so long as you continue to attach that ridiculous degree of importance to the events of this life which so many people are inclined to do. Observe the effect which it has upon them: they are most uncomfortable if their little projects do not turn out according to their fancy—nothing is to be angular to them—they regard external things as the only realities; and as they have fixed their abode here, they must have it arranged to their mind. In all they undertake they feel the anxiety of a gambler, and not the calmness of a labouring man. It is, however, the success or failure of their efforts, and not the motives for their endeavour, which gives them this concern. "It will be all the same a hundred years hence." So says the Epicurean as he saunters by. The Christian exhorts them to extend their hopes and their fears to the far future. But they are up to their lips in the present, though they taste it none the more for that. And so they go on, fretting, and planning, and contending; until an event, about which of all their anxieties they have felt the least anxious, sweeps them and their cobwebs away from the face of the earth.

I have no intention of putting forward specifics for real afflictions, or pretending to teach refined methods for avoiding grief. As long, however, as there is anything to be done in a matter, the time for grieving about it has not come. But when the subject for grief is fixed and inevitable, sorrow is to be borne like pain. It is only a paroxysm of either that can justify us in neglecting the duties which no bereavement can lessen, and which no sorrow can leave us

without. And we may remember that sorrow is at once the lot, the trial, and the privilege of man.

Most of the aids to contentment above suggested are, comparatively, superficial ones; and though they may be serviceable, there is much in human nature that they cannot touch. Even pagans were wont to look for more potent remedies. They could not help seeking for some great idea to rest upon; something to still the throbbings of their souls; some primæval mystery which should be answerable for the miseries of life. Such was their idea of Necessity, the source of such systems as the Stoic and the Epicurean. Christianity rests upon very different foundations. And surely a Christian's reliance on divine goodness, and his full belief in another world, should console him under serious affliction, and bear the severer test of supporting him against that under-current of vexations which is not wanting in the smoothest lives.

## ON SELF-DISCIPLINE.

THERE is always some danger of self-discipline leading to a state of self-confidence: and the more so, when the motives for it are of a poor and worldly character, or the results of it outward only, and superficial. But surely when a man has got the better of any bad habit or evil disposition, his sensations should not be those of exultation only: ought they not rather to be akin to the shuddering faintness with which he would survey a chasm that he had been guided to avoid, or with which he would recall to mind a dubious deadly struggle which had terminated in his favour? The sense of danger is never, perhaps, so fully apprehended as when the danger has been overcome.

Self-discipline is grounded on self-knowledge. A man may be led to resolve upon some general course of self-discipline by a faint glimpse of his moral degradation: let him not be contented with that small insight. His first step in self-discipline should be to attempt to have something like an adequate idea of the extent of the disorder. The deeper he goes in this matter the better: he must try to probe his own nature thoroughly. Men often make use of what self-knowledge they may possess to frame for themselves skilful flattery, or to amuse themselves in fancying what such persons as they are would do under various imaginary circumstances. For flatteries and for fancies of this kind not much depth of self-knowledge is required; but he who wants to understand his own nature for the purpose of self-discipline, must strive to learn the whole truth about himself, and not shrink from telling it to his own soul—

“ To thine own self be true,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.”

The old courtier Polonius meant this for worldly wisdom; but it may be construed much more deeply.

Imagine the soul, then, thoroughly awake to its state of danger, and the whole energies of the man devoted to self-improvement. At this, there often arises a habit of introspection which is too limited in its nature: we scrutinise each action as if it were a thing by itself, independent and self-originating; and so our scrutiny does less good, perhaps, than might be expected from the pain it gives and the resolution it requires. Any truthful examination into our actions must be good; but we ought not to be satisfied with it, until it becomes both searching and progressive. Its

aim should be not only to investigate instances, but to discover principles. Thus,—suppose that our conscience upbraids us for any particular bad habit, we then regard each instance of it with intense self-reproach, and long for an opportunity of proving the amendment which seems certain to arise from our pangs of regret. The trial comes, and sometimes our former remorse is remembered, and saves us; and sometimes it is forgotten, and our conduct is as bad as it was before our conscience was awakened. Now in such a case we should begin at the beginning, and strive to discover where it is that we are wrong in the heart. This is not to be done by weighing each particular instance, and observing after what interval it occurred and whether with a little more, or a little less, temptation than usual: instead of dwelling chiefly on mere circumstances of this kind, we should try and get at the substance of the thing, so as to ascertain what fundamental precept of God is violated by the habit in question. That precept we should make our study; and then there is more hope of a permanent amendment.

Infinite toil would not enable you to sweep away a mist; but, by ascending a little, you may often look over it altogether. So it is with our moral improvement: we wrestle fiercely with a vicious habit, which would have no hold upon us if we ascended into a higher moral atmosphere.

As I have heard suggested, it is by adding to our good purposes, and nourishing the affections which are rightly placed, that we shall best be able to combat the bad ones. By adopting such a course you will not have yielded to your enemy, but will have gone, in all humility, to form new alliances: you will then resist an evil habit with the strength which you have gained in carrying out a good one.

You will find, too, that when you set your heart upon the things that are worthy of it, the small selfish ends, which used to be so dear to it, will appear almost disgusting; you will wonder that they could have had such hold upon you.

In the same way, if you extend and deepen your sympathies, the prejudices which have hitherto clung obstinately to you will fall away, your former uncharitableness will seem absolutely distasteful: you will have brought home to it feelings and opinions with which it cannot live.

Man, a creature of twofold nature, body and soul, should have both parts of that nature engaged in any matter in which he is concerned: spirit and form must both enter into it. It is idol-worship to substitute the form for the spirit; but it is a vain philosophy which seeks to dispense with the form. All this applies to self-discipline.

See how most persons love to connect some outward circumstances with their good resolutions! they resolve on commencing the new year with a surrender of this bad habit: they will alter their conduct as soon as they are at such a place. The mind thus shows its feebleness; but we must not conclude that the support it naturally seeks is useless. At the same time that we are to turn our chief attention to the attainment of right principles, we cannot safely neglect any assistance which may strengthen us in contending against bad habits: far is it from the spirit of true humility to look down upon such assistance. Who would not be glad to have the ring of Eastern story which should remind the wearer by its change of colour of his want of shame? Still these auxiliaries partake of a mechanical nature: we must not expect more from them than they can give: they may serve as aids to memory; they may form landmarks, as it were, of our progress; but they cannot, of themselves, maintain that progress.

It is in a similar spirit that we should treat what may be called prudential considerations. We may listen to the suggestions of prudence, and find them an aid to self-discipline ; but we should never rest upon them. While we do not fail to make the due use of them, we must never forget that they do not go to the root of the matter. Prudence may enable a man to conquer the world, but not to rule his own heart : it may change one evil passion for another ; but it is not a thing of potency enough to make a man change his nature.

Prayer is a constant source of invigoration to self-discipline ; not the thoughtless praying, which is a thing of custom ; but that which is sincere, intense, watchful. Let a man ask himself whether he really would have the thing he prays for : let him think, while he is praying for a spirit of forgiveness, whether even at that moment he is disposed to give up the luxury of anger. If not, what a horrible mockery it is ! To think that a man can find nothing better to do, in the presence of his Creator, than telling off so many words ; alone with his God, and repeating his task like a child ; longing to get rid of it, and indifferent to its meaning !

### ON OUR JUDGMENTS OF OTHER MEN.

IN forming these lightly, we wrong ourselves, and those whom we judge. In scattering such things abroad we endow our unjust thoughts with a life which we cannot take away, and become false witnesses to pervert the judgments of the world in general. Who does not feel that to describe with fidelity the least portion of the entangled nature that is within him would be no easy matter ? And yet the same

man who feels this, and who, perhaps, would be ashamed of talking at hazard about the properties of a flower, of a weed, of some figure in geometry, will put forth his guesses about the character of his brother-man, as if he had the fullest authority for all that he was saying.

But perhaps we are not wont to make such rash remarks ourselves; we are only pleased to receive them with the most obliging credence from the lips of any person we may chance to meet with. Such credulity is anything but blameless. We cannot think too seriously of the danger of taking upon trust these off-hand sayings, and of the positive guilt of uttering them as if they were our own, or had been assayed by our observation. How much we should be ashamed if we knew the slight grounds of some of those uncharitable judgments to which we lend the influence of our name by repeating them! And even if we repeat such things only as we have good reason to believe in, we should still be in no hurry to put them forward, especially if they are sentences of condemnation. There is a maxim of this kind which Thomas à Kempis, in his chapter "De prudentiâ in agendis," has given with all the force of expression that it merits. "*Ad hanc etiam pertinet, non quibuslibet hominum verbis credere; nec audita vel credita, mox ad aliorum aures effundere.*"

There are certain things quite upon the surface of a man's character: there are certain obvious facts in any man's conduct; and there are persons who, being very much before the world, offer plenty of materials for judging about them. Such circumstances as these may fairly induce you to place credence in a general opinion, which, however, you have no means of verifying in any way for yourself: but in no case should you suffer yourself to be carried away at once by the current sayings about men's characters and

conduct. If you do, you are helping to form a mob. Consider what these sayings are : how seldom they embody the character discussed ; or go far to exhaust the question, if it is one of conduct. It is well if they describe a part with faithfulness, or give indications from which a shrewd and impartial thinker may deduce some true conclusions. Again, these sayings may be true in themselves, but the prominence given to them may lead to very false impressions. Besides, how many of them must be formed upon the opinion of a few persons, and those, perhaps, forward thinkers.

You feel that you yourself would be liable to make mistakes of all kinds if you had to form an independent judgment in the matter ; do not too readily suppose that the general opinions you hear are free from such mistakes merely because they are made, or appear to you to be made, by a great many people.

If we come to analyse the various opinions we hear of men's character and conduct, there must be many which are formed wrongly, though sincerely, either from imperfect information, or erroneous reasoning. There will be others which are the simple result of the prejudices and passions of the persons judging, of their humours, and sometimes even of their ingenuity. There will be others grounded on total misrepresentations, which arise from imperfect hearing, or from some entire mistake, or from a report being made by a person who understood so little of the matter that it was not possible for him to convey, with anything like accuracy, what he heard about it. Then there are the careless things which are said in general conversation, but which often have as much apparent weight as if they had been well considered. Sometimes these various causes are combined, and the result is that



an opinion of some man's character and conduct gets abroad which is formed after a wrong method, by prejudiced persons, upon a false statement of facts, respecting a matter which they cannot possibly understand; and this is then left to be inflated by Folly, and blown about by Idleness.

There is an excellent passage in Wollaston's *Religion of Nature* upon this subject, where he says, "The good or bad repute of men depends in a great measure upon mean people, who carry their stories from family to family, and propagate them very fast; like little insects, which lay apace, and the less the faster. There are few, very few, who have the opportunity and the will and *the ability to represent things truly*. Beside the matters of fact themselves, there are many circumstances which, before sentence is passed, ought to be known and weighed, and yet scarce ever can be known but to the person himself who is concerned. He may have other views, and another sense of things, than his judges have; and what he understands, what he feels, what he intends, may be a secret confined to his own breast. Or perhaps the censurer, notwithstanding this kind of men talk as if they were infallible, may be mistaken himself in his opinion, and judge that to be wrong which in truth is right."

Few people have imagination enough to enter into the delusion of others, or indeed to look at the actions of any other person with any prejudices but their own. Perhaps, however, it would be nearer the truth to say that few people are in the habit of employing their imagination in the service of charity. Most persons require its magic aid to gild their castles in the air; to conduct them along those fancied triumphal processions in which they themselves play so conspicuous a part; to conquer enemies for them without

battles; and to make them virtuous without effort. This is what they want their imagination for: they cannot spare it for any little errand of charity. And sometimes when men do think charitably, they are afraid to speak out, for fear of being considered stupid or credulous.

We have been considering the danger of adopting current sayings about men's character and conduct: but suppose we consider, in detail, the difficulty of forming an original opinion on these matters; especially if we have not a personal knowledge of the men of whom we speak. In the first place, we seldom know with sufficient exactness the facts upon which we judge; and a little thing may make a great difference when we come to investigate motives. But the report of a transaction sometimes represents the real facts no better than the laboured variation does the simple air; which, amidst so many shakes and flourishes, might not be recognised even by the person who composed it. Then, again, how can we ensure that we rightly interpret those actions which we exactly know? Perhaps one of the first motives that we look for is self-interest, when we want to explain an action: but we have scarcely ever such a knowledge of the nature and fortunes of another, as to be able to decide what is his interest, much less what it may appear to him to be: besides, a man's fancies, his envy, his wilfulness, every day interfere with and override his interests. He will know this himself, and will often try to conceal it by inventing motives of self-interest to account for his doing what he has a mind to do.

It is well to be thoroughly impressed with a sense of the difficulty of judging about others; still, judge we must, and sometimes very hastily; the purposes of life require it. We have, however, more and better materials, sometimes, than we are aware of: we must not imagine that they are always

deep-seated and recondite: they often lie upon the surface. Indeed, the primary character of a man is especially discernible in trifles: for then he acts, as it were, almost unconsciously. It is upon the method of observing and testing these things that a just knowledge of individual men in great measure depends. You may learn more of a person even by a little converse with him than by a faithful outline of his history. The most important of his actions may be anything but the most significant of the man: for they are likely to be the results of many things besides his nature. To understand that, I doubt whether you might not learn more from a good portrait of him than from two or three of the most prominent actions of his life. Indeed, if men did not express much of their nature in their manners, appearance, and general bearing, we should be at a sad loss to make up our minds how to deal with each other.

In judging of others, it is important to distinguish those parts of the character and intellect which are easily discernible from those which require much observation. In the intellect, we soon perceive whether a man has wit, acuteness, or logical power. It is not easy to discover whether he has judgment. And it requires some study of the man to ascertain whether he has practical wisdom; which, indeed, is a result of high moral, as well as intellectual, qualities.

In the moral nature we soon detect selfishness, egotism, and exaggeration. Carelessness about truth is soon found out; you see it in a thousand little things. On the other hand, it is very difficult to come to a right conclusion about a man's temper, until you have seen a great deal of him. Of his tastes, some will lie on the surface, others not; for there is a certain reserve about most people in speaking of

the things they like best. Again, it is always a hard matter to understand any man's feelings. Nations differ in their modes of expressing feelings, and how much more individual men !

There are certain cases in which we are peculiarly liable to err in our judgments of others. Thus, I think, we are all disposed to dislike, in a manner disproportionate to their demerits, those who offend us by pretension of any kind. We are apt to fancy that they despise us ; whereas, all the while, perhaps, they are only courting our admiration. There are people who wear the worst part of their characters outwards: they offend our vanity; they rouse our fears; and under these influences we omit to consider how often a scornful man is tender-hearted, and an assuming man, one who longs to be popular and to please.

Then there are characters of such a different kind from our own, that we are without the means of measuring and appreciating them. A man who has no humour, how difficult for him to understand one who has !

But of all the errors in judging of others, some of the worst are made in judging of those who are nearest to us. They think that we have entirely made up our minds about them, and are apt to show us that sort of behaviour only which they know we expect. Perhaps, too, they fear us, or they are convinced that we do not and cannot sympathise with them. And so we move about in a mist, and talk of phantoms as if they were living men, and think that we understand those who never interchange any discourse with us but the talk of the market-place ; or if they do, it is only as players who are playing a part set down in certain words, to be eked out with the stage gestures for each affection, who would deem themselves little else than mad if they were to say out to us anything of their own.

## ON THE EXERCISE OF BENEVOLENCE.

WITH the most engaging objects of benevolence around them, men consume the largest part of their existence in the acquisition of money, or of knowledge; or in sighing for the opportunities of advancement; or in doting over some unavailing sorrow. Or, as it often happens, they are outwardly engaged in slaving over the forms and follies of the world, while their minds are given up to dreams of vanity; or to long-drawn reveries, a mere indulgence of their fancy. And yet hard by them are groans, and horrors, and sufferings of all kinds, which seem to penetrate no deeper than their senses.

Let them think what boundless occupations there are before us all! Consider the masses of human beings in our manufacturing towns and crowded cities, left to their own devices—the destitute peasantry of our sister-land—the horrors of slavery wherever it exists—the general aspect of the common people—the pervading want of education—the fallacies and falsehoods which are left, unchecked, to accomplish all the mischief that is in them—the many legal and executive reforms not likely to meet with much popular impulse, and requiring, on that account, the more diligence from those who have any insight into such matters. By employing himself upon any one of the above subjects, a man is likely to do some good. If he only ascertains what has been done, and what is doing, in any of these matters, he may be of great service. A man of real information becomes a centre of opinion, and therefore of action.

Many a man will say, "This is all very true: there certainly is a great deal of good to be done. Indeed, one is perplexed what to choose as one's point of action; and still

more how to begin upon it." To which I would answer, Is there no one service for the great family of man which has yet interested you? Is no work of benevolence brought near to you by the peculiar circumstances of your life? If there is, follow it at once. If not, still you must not wait for something apposite to occur. Take up any subject relating to the welfare of mankind, the first that comes to hand; read about it; think about it; trace it in the world, and see if it will not come to your heart. How listlessly the eye glances over the map of a country upon which we have never set foot! On the other hand, with what satisfaction we contemplate the mere outline only of a land we have once travelled over! Think earnestly upon any subject, investigate it sincerely, and you are sure to love it. You will not complain again of not knowing whither to direct your attention. There have been enthusiasts about heraldry. Many have devoted themselves to chess. Is the welfare of living, thinking, suffering, eternal creatures, less interesting than "argent" and "azure," or than the knight's move and the progress of a pawn?

There are many persons, doubtless, who feel the wants and miseries of their fellow-men tenderly if not deeply; but this feeling is not of the kind to induce them to exert themselves out of their own small circle. They have little faith in their individual exertions doing aught towards a remedy for any of the great disorders of the world. If an evil of magnitude forces itself upon their attention, they take shelter in a comfortable sort of belief that the course of events, or the gradual enlightenment of mankind, or, at any rate, something which is too large for them to have any concern in, will set it right. In short, they are content to remain spectators, or, at best, to wait until an occasion shall arrive when their benevolence may act at once, with

as little preparation of means, as if it were something magical.

But opportunities of doing good, though abundant and obvious enough, are not exactly fitted to our hands: we must be alert in preparing ourselves for them. Benevolence requires method and activity in its exercise. It is by no means the same sort of thing as the indolent good-humour with which a well-fed man, reclining on a sunny bank, looks upon the working world around him.

As to the notion of waiting for the power to do good, it is one that we must never listen to. Surely the exercise of a man's benevolence is not to depend upon his worldly good fortune! Every man has to-day the power of laying some foundation for doing good, if not of doing it. And whoever does not exert himself until he has a large power of carrying out his good intentions, may be sure that he will not make the most of the opportunity when it comes. It is not in the heat of action, nor when a man, from his position, is likely to be looked up to with some reverence, that he should have to begin his search for facts or principles. He should then come forth to apply results; not to work them out painfully, and perhaps precipitately, before the eyes of the world.

The worldly-wise may ask, "Will not these benevolent pursuits prevent a man from following with sufficient force (what they call) his legitimate occupations?" I do not see why. Surely Providence has not made our livelihood such an all-absorbing affair that it does not leave us room or time for our benevolence to work in. However, if a man will only give up that portion of his thinking time which he spends upon vainglory, upon imagining, for instance, what other people are thinking about him, he will have time

and energy enough to pursue a very laborious system of benevolence.

I do not mean to contend that active benevolence may not hinder a man's advancement in the world ; for advancement greatly depends upon a reputation for excellence in some one thing of which the world perceives that it has present need, and an obvious attention to other things, though perhaps not incompatible with the excellence itself, may easily prevent a person from obtaining a reputation for it. But any deprivation of this kind would be readily endured if we only took the view of our social relations which Christianity opens to us. We should then see that benevolence is not a thing to be taken up by chance, and put by at once to make way for every employment which savours of self-interest. Benevolence is the largest part of our business, beginning with our home duties, and extending itself to the utmost verge of humanity. A vague feeling of kindness towards our fellow-creatures is no state of mind to rest in. It is not enough for us to be able to say that nothing of human interest is alien to us, and that we give our acquiescence, or indeed our transient assistance, to any scheme of benevolence that may come in our way. No ; in promoting the welfare of others we must toil ; we must devote to it earnest thought, constant care, and zealous endeavour. What is more, we must do all this with patience, and be ready, in the same cause, to make an habitual sacrifice of our own tastes and wishes. Nothing short of this is the visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, which our creed requires of us.

Kindness to animals is no unworthy exercise of benevolence. -- We hold that the life of brutes perishes with their breath, and that they are never to be clothed again with



consciousness. The inevitable shortness then of their existence should plead for them touchingly. The insects on the surface of the water, poor ephemeral things, who would needlessly abridge their dancing pleasure of to-day? Such feelings we should have towards the whole animate creation. To those animals, over which we are masters for however short a time, we have positive duties to perform. This seems too obvious to be insisted upon; but there are persons who act as though they thought they could buy the right of ill-treating any of God's creatures.

We should never in any way consent to the ill-treatment of animals, because the fear of ridicule, or some other fear, prevents our interfering. As to there being anything really trifling in any act of humanity, however slight, it is moral blindness to suppose so. The few moments in the course of each day which a man absorbed in some worldly pursuit may carelessly expend in kind words or trifling charities to those around him, and kindness to an animal is one of these, are perhaps, in the sight of Heaven, the only time that he has lived to any purpose worthy of recording.

### DOMESTIC RULE.

TACITUS says of Agricola, that "he governed his family, which many find to be a harder task than to govern a province." And the worst of this difficulty is, that its existence is frequently unperceived, until it comes to be pressingly felt.

For, either a man thinks that he must needs understand those whom he sees daily, and also, perhaps, that it is no great matter whether he understand them or not, if he is resolved to do his duty by them; or he believes that in

domestic rule there is much licence, and that each occasion is to be dealt with by some law made at the time, or after; or he imagines that any domestic matter which he may leave to-day omitted or ill-done can be repaired at his leisure, when the concerns of the outer world are not so pressing as they are at present.

But each day brings its own duties, and carries them along with it; and they are as waves broken on the shore, many like them coming after but none ever the same. And amongst all his duties, as there are none in which a man acts more by himself and can do more harm with less outcry from the world, so there are none requiring more forethought and watchfulness than those which arise from his domestic relations. Nor can there be a reasonable hope of his fulfilling those duties while he is ignorant of the feelings, however familiar he may be with the countenances, of those around him.

The extent and power of domestic rule are very great: but this is often overlooked by the persons who possess it; and they are rather apt to underrate the influence of their own authority. They can hardly imagine how strongly it is felt by others, unless they see it expressed in something outward. The effects of this mistake are often increased by another, which comes into operation when men are dealing with their inferiors in rank and education: in which case, they are rather apt to fancy that the natural sense of propriety, which would put the right limit to familiar intercourse, belongs only to the well-educated or the well-born. And from either of these causes, or both united, they are led, perhaps, to add to their authority by a harshness not their own rather than to impair it, as they fancy, by that degree of freedom which they must allow to those around them, if they would enter into their feelings, and understand

their dispositions. Perhaps there are some persons who think that they can manage very well without this familiar intercourse: and certainly there is but little occasion for knowing much about the nature of those whom you intend only to restrain. Coercion, however, is but a small part of government.

We should always be most anxious to avoid provoking the rebel spirit of the will in those who are entrusted to our guidance: we should not attempt to tie them up to their duties, like galley-slaves to their labour. We should be very careful that, in our anxiety to get the outward part of an action performed to our mind, we do not destroy that germ of spontaneousness which could alone give any significance to the action. God has allowed free will to man, for the choice of good or evil; and is it likely that it is left to us to make our fellow-creatures virtuous by word of command? We may insist upon a routine of proprieties being performed with soldier-like precision; but there is no drilling of men's hearts.

It is a great thing to maintain the just limits of domestic authority, and to place it upon its right foundation. You cannot make reason conform to it. It may be fair to insist upon a certain thing being done, but not that others should agree with you in saying that it is the best thing that could have been done; for there cannot be a shorter way of making them hypocritical. Your submitting the matter at all to their judgments may be gratuitous; but if you do so, you must remember that the Courts of Reason recognise no difference of persons. Your wishes may fairly outweigh their arguments; but this of course is foreign to the reasonableness or unreasonableness of the thing itself, considered independently.

Domestic Rule is founded upon truth and love. If

it has not both of these, it is nothing better than a despotism.

It requires the perpetual exercise of love in its most extended form. You have to learn the dispositions of those under you, and to teach them to understand yours. In order to do this, you must sympathise with them, and convince them of your doing so ; for upon your sympathy will often depend their truthfulness. Thus, you must persuade a child to place confidence in you, if you wish to form an open, upright character. You cannot terrify it into habits of truth. On the contrary, are not its earliest falsehoods caused by fear much oftener than from a wish to obtain any of its little ends by deceit? How often the complaint is heard from those in domestic authority that they are not confided in ! But they forget how hard it is for an inferior to confide in a superior, and that he will scarcely venture to do so without the hope of some sympathy on the part of the latter ; and the more so, as half our confidences are about our follies, or what we deem such.

Every one who has paid the slightest attention to this subject knows that domestic rule is built upon justice, and therefore upon truth ; but it may not have been observed what evils will arise from even a slight deviation into conventionality. For instance, there is a common expression about "overlooking trifles." But what many persons should say, when they use this expression, is,—That they affect not to observe something, when there is no reason why they should not openly recognise it. Thus they contrive to make matters of offence out of things which really have no harm in them. Or the expression means that they do not care to take notice of something, which they really believe to be wrong ; and as it is not

of much present annoyance to them, they persuade themselves that it is not of much harm to those who practise it. In either case, it is their duty to look boldly at the matter. The greater quantity of truth and distinctness you can throw into your proceedings the better. Connivance creates uncertainty, and gives an example of slyness; and very often you will find that you connive at some practice, merely because you have not made up your mind whether it is right or wrong, and you wish to spare yourself the trouble of thinking. All this is falsehood.

Whatever you allow in the way of pleasure or of liberty, to those under your control, you should do it heartily: you should recognise it entirely, encourage it, and enter into it. If, on the contrary, you do not care for their pleasures, or sympathise with their happiness, how can you expect to obtain their confidence? And when you tell them that you consult their welfare, they look upon it as some abstract idea of your own. They will doubt whether you can know what is best for them, if they have good reason for thinking that you are likely to leave their particular views of happiness entirely out of the account.

We come next to consider some of the various means which may be made use of in Domestic Rule.

Of course it is obvious that his own example must be the chief means in any man's power, by which he can illustrate and enforce those duties which he seeks to impress upon his household.

Next to this, praise and blame are among the strongest means which he possesses; and they should not depend upon his humour. He should not throw a bit of praise at his dependants by way of making up for a previous display of anger not warranted by the occasion.

Ridicule is in general to be avoided; not that it is

inefficient, perhaps, for the present purpose ; but because it tends to make a poor and world-fearing character. It is too strong a remedy ; and can seldom be applied with such just precision as to neutralise the evil aimed at, without destroying, at the same time, something that is good.

Still less should it ever appear that ridicule is directed against that which is good in itself, or which may be the beginning of goodness. There is, perhaps, more gentleness required in dealing with the infant virtues, than even with the vices of those under our guidance. We should be very kind to any attempts at amendment. An idle sneer, or a look of incredulity, has been the death of many a good resolve. We should also be very cautious in reminding those who now would fain be wiser, of their rash sayings of evil, of their early and uncharitable judgments of others ; otherwise we run a great risk of hardening them in evil. This is especially to be guarded against with the young ; for never having felt the mutability of all human things, nor having lived long enough to discover that his former certainties are amongst the strangest things which a man looks back upon in the vista of the past : not perceiving that time is told by that pendulum, man, which goes backwards and forwards in its progress ; nor dreaming that the way to some opinions may lie through their opposites ; they are mightily ashamed of inconsistency, and may be made to look upon reparation as a crime.

The following are some general maxims which may be of service to any one in domestic authority.

The first is to make as few crimes as he can : and not to lay down those rules of practice which, from a careful observation of their consequences, he has ascertained to be salutary, as if they were so many innate truths which all persons alike must at once, and fully, comprehend.

Let him not attempt to regulate other people's pleasures by his own tastes.

In commanding, it will not always be superfluous for him to reflect whether the thing commanded is possible.

In punishing, he should not consult his anger ; nor in remitting punishment, his ease.

Let him consider whether any part of what he is inclined to call disobedience may have resulted from an insufficient expression of his own wishes.

He should be inclined to trust largely.

### ADVICE.

ADVICE is sure of a hearing when it coincides with our previous conclusions, and therefore comes in the shape of praise or of encouragement. It is not unwelcome when we derive it for ourselves, by applying the moral of some other person's life to our own, though the points of resemblance which bring it home may be far from flattering and the advice itself far from palatable. We can even endure its being addressed to us by another, when it is interwoven with regret at some error, not of ours, but of his ; and when we see that he throws in a little advice to us, by way of introducing, with more grace, a full recital of his own misfortunes.

But in general it is with advice as with taxation : we can endure very little of either, if they come to us in the direct way. They must not thrust themselves upon us. We do not understand their knocking at our doors ; besides, they always choose such inconvenient times, and are for ever talking of arrears.

There is a wide difference between the advice which is

thrust upon you, and that which you have to seek for ; the general carelessness of the one, and the caution of the other, are to be taken into account. In sifting the latter, you must take care to separate the decorous part of it. I mean all that which the adviser puts in, because he thinks the world would expect it from a person of his character and station—all that which was to sound well to a third party, of whom, perhaps, the adviser stands somewhat in awe. You cannot expect him to neglect his own safety. The oracles will Philippise, as long as Philip is the master ; but still they have an inner meaning for Athenian ears.

It is a disingenuous thing to ask for *advice*, when you mean *assistance* ; and it will be a just punishment if you get that which you pretended to want. There is a still greater insincerity in affecting to care about another's advice, when you lay the circumstances before him only for the chance of his sanctioning a course which you had previously resolved on. This practice is noticed by Rochefoucauld, who has also laid bare the falseness of those givers of advice who have hardly heard to the end of your story, before they have begun to think how they can advise upon it to their own interest, or their own renown.

It is a maxim of prudence that when you advise a man to do something which is for your own interest as well as for his, you should put your own motive for advising him full in view, with all the weight that belongs to it. If you conceal the interest which you have in the matter, and he should afterwards discover it, he will be resolutely deaf even to that part of the argument which fairly does concern himself. If the lame man had endeavoured to persuade his blind friend that it was pure charity which induced him to lend the use of his eyes, you may be certain that he never



would have been carried home, though it was the other's interest to carry him.

To get extended views, you should consult with persons who differ from you in disposition, circumstances, and modes of thought. At the same time, the most practicable advice may often be obtained from those who are of a similar nature to yourself, or who understand you so thoroughly that they are sure to make their advice personal. This advice will contain sympathy ; for as it has been said, a man always sympathises to a certain extent with what he understands. It will not, perhaps, be the soundest advice that can be given in the abstract, but it may be that which you can best profit by ; for you may be able to act up to it with some consistency. This applies more particularly when the advice is wanted for some matter which is not of a temporary nature, and where a course of action will have to be adopted. It is observed in *The Statesman* with much truth, "Nothing can be for a man's interest in the long run which is not founded on his character."

For similar reasons, when you have to give advice, you should never forget whom you are addressing, and what is practicable for him. You should not look about for the wisest thing which can be said, but for that which your friend has the heart to undertake, and the ability to accomplish. You must sometimes feel with him, before you can possibly think for him. There is more need of keeping this in mind, the greater you know the difference to be between your friend's nature and your own. Your advice should not degenerate into comparisons between what would have been your conduct, and what was your friend's. You should be able to take the matter up at the point at which it is brought to you. It is very well to go back, and to show him what might, or what ought to have

been done, if it throws any light upon what is to be done; or if you have any other good purpose in such conversation. But remember that comment, however judicious, is not advice; and that advice should always tend to something practicable.

The advice which we just have been speaking of, is of that kind which relates to points of conduct. If you want to change a man's principles, you may have to take him out of himself, as it were; to show him fully the intense difference between your own views and his, and to trace up that difference to its source. Your object is not to make him do the best with what he has, but to induce him to throw something away altogether.

There are occasions on which a man feels that he has so fully made up his mind that hardly anything could move him; and, at the same time, he knows that he shall meet with much blame from those whose good opinion is of value to him, if he acts according to that mind. Let him not think to break his fall by asking their advice beforehand. As it is, they will be severe upon him for not having consulted them; but they will be outrageous if, after having consulted them, he then acts in direct opposition to their counsel. Besides, they will not be so inclined to parade the fact of their not having been consulted, as they would of their having given judicious advice which was unhappily neglected. I am not speaking of those instances in which a man is bound to consult others, but of such as constantly occur, where his consulting them is a thing which may be expected, but is not due.

In seeking for a friend to advise you, look for uprightness in him, rather than for ingenuity. It frequently happens that all you want is moral strength. You can discern consequences well enough, but cannot make up your mind to

bear them. Let your Mentor also be a person of nice conscience, for such a one is less likely to fall into that error to which we are all so liable, of advising our friends to act with less forbearance, and with less generosity, than we should be inclined to show ourselves, if the case were our own. "If I were you" is a phrase often on our lips; but we take good care not to disturb our identity, nor to quit the disengaged position of a bystander. We recommend the course we might pursue if we were acting for you in your absence, but such as you never ought to undertake in your own behalf.

Besides being careful for your own sake about the persons whom you go to for advice, you should be careful also for theirs. It is an act of selfishness unnecessarily to consult those who are likely to feel a peculiar difficulty or delicacy in being your advisers, and who, perhaps, had better not be informed at all about the matter.

### SECRECY.

FOR once that secrecy is formally imposed upon you, it is implied a hundred times by the concurrent circumstances. All that your friend says to you, as to his friend, is entrusted to you only. Much of what a man tells you in the hour of affliction, in sudden anger, or in any outpouring of his heart, should be sacred. In his craving for sympathy he has spoken to you as to his own soul.

To repeat what you have heard in social intercourse is sometimes a sad treachery; and when it is not treacherous, it is often foolish. For you commonly relate but a part of what has happened, and even if you are able to relate that part with fairness, it is still as likely to be misconstrued as a

word of many meanings, in a foreign tongue, without the context.

There are few conversations which do not imply some degree of mutual confidence, however slight. And in addition to that which is said in confidence there is generally something which is peculiar, though not confidential; which is addressed to the present company alone, though not confided to their secrecy. It is meant for them, or for persons like them, and they are expected to understand it rightly. So that when a man has no scruple in repeating all that he hears to anybody that he meets, he pays but a poor compliment to himself; for he seems to take it for granted that what was said in his presence would have been said, in the same words, at any time, aloud, and in the market-place. In short, that he is the average man of mankind; which I doubt much whether any man would like to consider himself.

On the other hand, there is an habitual and unmeaning reserve in some men which makes secrets without any occasion; and it is the least to say of such things that they are needless. Sometimes it proceeds from an innate shyness or timidity of disposition; sometimes from a temper naturally suspicious; or it may be the result of having been frequently betrayed or oppressed. From whatever cause it comes it is a failing. As cunning is some men's strength, so this sort of reserve is some men's prudence. The man who does not know when, or how much, or to whom to confide, will do well in maintaining a Pythagorean silence. It is his best course. I would not have him change it on any account; I only wish him not to mistake it for wisdom.

That happy union of frankness and reserve which is to be desired comes not by studying rules, either for candour or for caution. It results chiefly from an uprightness of

purpose enlightened by a profound and delicate care for the feelings of others. This will go very far in teaching us what to confide, and what to conceal, in our own affairs; what to repeat, and what to suppress, in those of other people. The stone in which nothing is seen, and the polished metal which reflects all things, are both alike hard and insensible.

When a matter is made public, to proclaim that it had ever been confided to your secrecy may be no trifling breach of confidence; and it is the only one which is then left for you to commit.

With respect to the kind of people to be trusted, it may be observed that grave, proud men are very safe confidants; and that those persons, who have ever had to conduct any business in which secrecy was essential, are likely to acquire a habit of reserve for all occasions.

On the other hand, it is a question whether a secret will escape sooner by means of a vain man or a simpleton. There are some people who play with a secret until at last it is suggested by their manner to some shrewd person who knows a little of the circumstances connected with it. There are others whom it is unsafe to trust: not that they are vain, and so wear the secret as an ornament; not that they are foolish, and so let it drop by accident; not that they are treacherous, and sell it for their own advantage. But they are simple-minded people, with whom the world has gone smoothly, who would not themselves make any mischief of the secret which they disclose, and therefore do not see what harm can come of telling it.

Before you make any confidence, you should consider whether the thing you wish to confide is of weight enough to be a secret. Your small secrets require the greatest care. Most persons suppose that they have kept them sufficiently

when they have been silent about them for a certain time; and this is hardly to be wondered at, if there is nothing in their nature to remind a person that they were told to him as secrets.

There is sometimes a good reason for using concealment even with your dearest friends. It is that you may be less liable to be reminded of your anxieties when you have resolved to put them aside. Few persons have tact enough to perceive when to be silent, and when to offer you counsel or condolence.

You should be careful not to entrust another unnecessarily with a secret which it may be a hard matter for him to keep, and which may expose him to somebody's displeasure, when it is hereafter discovered that he was the object of your confidence. Your desire for aid, or for sympathy, is not to be indulged by dragging other people into your misfortunes.

There is as much responsibility in imparting your own secrets, as in keeping those of your neighbour.

## ON THE EDUCATION OF A MAN OF BUSINESS.

THE essential qualities for a man of business are of a moral nature: these are to be cultivated first. He must learn betimes to love truth. That same love of truth will be found a potent charm to bear him safely through the world's entanglements—I mean safely in the most worldly sense. Besides, the love of truth not only makes a man act with more simplicity, and therefore with less chance of error; but it conduces to the highest intellectual development. The following passage in *The Statesman* gives the reason: "The correspondences of wisdom and goodness are manifold; and that they will accompany each other is to be inferred

not only because men's wisdom makes them good, but also because their goodness makes them wise. Questions of right and wrong are a perpetual exercise of the faculties of those who are solicitous as to the right and wrong of what they do and see; and a deep interest of the heart in these questions carries with it a deeper cultivation of the understanding than can be easily effected by any other excitement to intellectual activity."

What has just been said of the love of truth applies also to other moral qualities. Thus, charity enlightens the understanding quite as much as it purifies the heart. And indeed knowledge is not more girt about with power than goodness is with wisdom.

The next thing in the training of one who is to become a man of business will be for him to form principles; for without these, when thrown on the sea of action, he will be without rudder and compass. They are the best results of study. Whether it is history, or political economy, or ethics, that he is studying, these principles are to be the reward of his labour. A principle resembles a law in the physical world; though it can seldom have the same certainty, as the facts which it has to explain and embrace do not admit of being weighed or numbered with the same exactness as material things. The principles which our student adopts at first may be unsound, may be insufficient, but he must not neglect to form some; and must only nourish a love of truth that will not allow him to hold to any the moment that he finds them to be erroneous.

Much depends upon the temperament of a man of business. It should be hopeful, that it may bear him up against the faint-heartedness, the folly, the falsehood, and the numberless discouragements which even a prosperous man will have to endure. It should also be calm; for else he

may be driven wild by any great pressure of business, and lose his time, and his head, in rushing from one unfinished thing to begin something else. Now this wished-for conjunction of the calm and the hopeful is very rare. It is, however, in every man's power to study well his own temperament, and to provide against the defects in it.

A habit of thinking for himself is one which may be acquired by the solitary student. But the habit of deciding for himself, so indispensable to a man of business, is not to be gained by study. Decision is a thing that cannot be fully exercised until it is actually wanted. You cannot play at deciding. You must have realities to deal with.

It is true that the formation of principles, which has been spoken of before, requires decision; but it is of that kind which depends upon deliberate judgment: whereas the decision which is wanted in the world's business must ever be within call, and does not judge so much as it foresees and chooses. This kind of decision is to be found in those who have been thrown early on their own resources, or who have been brought up in great freedom.

It would be difficult to lay down any course of study, not technical, that would be peculiarly fitted to form a man of business. He should be brought up in the habit of reasoning closely: and to ensure this there is hardly anything better for him than the study of geometry.

In any course of study to be laid down for him something like universality should be aimed at, which not only makes the mind agile, but gives variety of information. Such a system will make him acquainted with many modes of thought, with various classes of facts, and will enable him to understand men better.

There will be a time in his youth which may, perhaps, be well spent in those studies which are of a metaphysical



nature. In the investigation of some of the great questions of philosophy a breadth and a tone may be given to a man's mode of thinking which will afterwards be of signal use to him in the business of everyday life.

We cannot enter here into a description of the technical studies for a man of business ; but I may point out that there are works which soften the transition from the schools to the world, and which are particularly needed in a system of education, like our own, consisting of studies for the most part remote from real life. These works are such as tend to give the student that interest in the common things about him which he has scarcely ever been called upon to feel. They show how imagination and philosophy can be woven into practical wisdom. Such are the writings of Bacon. His lucid order, his grasp of the subject, the comprehensiveness of his views, his knowledge of mankind—the greatest perhaps that has ever been distinctly given out by any uninspired man—the practical nature of his purposes, and his respect for anything of human interest, render Bacon's works unrivalled in their fitness to form the best men for the conduct of the highest affairs.

It is not, however, so much the thing studied as the manner of studying it. Our student is not intended to become a learned man, but a man of business ; not "a full man," but a "ready man." He must be taught to arrange and express what he knows. For this purpose let him employ himself in making digests, arranging and classifying materials, writing narratives, and in deciding upon conflicting evidence. All these exercises require method. He must expect that his early attempts will be clumsy ; he begins, perhaps, by dividing his subject in any way that occurs to him, with no other view than that of treating separate portions of it separately ; he does not perceive, at

first, what things are of one kind, and what of another, and what should be the logical order of their following. But from such rude beginnings method is developed ; and there is hardly any degree of toil for which he would not be compensated by such a result. He will have a sure reward in the clearness of his own views, and in the facility of explaining them to others. People bring their attention to the man who gives them most profit for it ; and this will be one who is a master of method.

Our student should begin soon to cultivate a fluency in writing—I do not mean a flow of words, but a habit of expressing his thoughts with accuracy, with brevity, and with readiness, which can only be acquired by practice early in life. You find persons who, from neglect in this part of their education, can express themselves briefly and accurately, but only after much care and labour. And again, you meet with others who cannot express themselves accurately, although they have method in their thoughts, and can write with readiness ; but they have not been accustomed to look at the precise meaning of words ; and such people are apt to fall into the common error of indulging in a great many words, as if it were from a sort of hope that some of them might be to the purpose.

In the style of a man of business nothing is to be aimed at but plainness and precision. For instance, a close repetition of the same word for the same thing need not be avoided. The aversion to such repetitions may be carried too far in all kinds of writing. In literature, however, you are seldom brought to account for misleading people ; but in business you may soon be called upon to pay the penalty for having shunned the word which would exactly have expressed your meaning.

I cannot conclude this essay better than by endeavouring

to describe what sort of person a consummate man of business should be.

He should be able to fix his attention on details, and be ready to give every kind of argument a hearing. This will not encumber him, for he must have been practised beforehand in the exercise of his intellect, and be strong in principles. One man collects materials together, and there they remain, a shapeless heap; another, possessed of method, can arrange what he has collected; but such a man as I would describe, by the aid of principles, goes farther, and builds with his materials.

He should be courageous. The courage, however, required in civil affairs is that which belongs rather to the able commander than the mere soldier. But any kind of courage is serviceable.

Besides a stout heart, he should have a patient temperament, and a vigorous but disciplined imagination; and then he will plan boldly, and with large extent of view, execute calmly, and not be stretching out his hand for things not yet within his grasp. He will let opportunities grow before his eyes, until they are ripe to be seized. He will think steadily over possible failure, in order to provide a remedy or a retreat. There will be a strength of repose about him.

He must have a deep sense of responsibility. He must believe in the power and vitality of truth, and in all he does or says, should be anxious to express as much truth as possible.

His feeling of responsibility and love of truth will almost inevitably endow him with diligence, accuracy, and discreteness,—those commonplace requisites for a good man of business, without which all the rest may never come to be “translated into action.”

## ON THE TRANSACTION OF BUSINESS.

THIS subject may be divided into two parts. 1. Dealing with others about business. 2. Dealing with the business itself.

### 1. *Dealing with others about Business.*

The first part of the general subject embraces the choice and management of agents, the transaction of business by means of interviews, the choice of colleagues, and the use of councils. Each of these topics will be treated separately. There remain, however, certain general rules with respect to our dealings with others which may naturally find a place here.

In your converse with the world avoid anything like a juggling dexterity. The proper use of dexterity is to prevent your being circumvented by the cunning of others. It should not be aggressive.

Concessions and compromises form a large and a very important part of our dealings with others. Concessions must generally be looked upon as distinct defeats ; and you must expect no gratitude for them. I am far from saying that it may not be wise to make concessions, but this will be done more wisely when you understand the nature of them.

In making compromises, do not think to gain much by concealing your views and wishes. You are as likely to suffer from its not being known how to please or satisfy you, as from any attempt to overreach you, grounded on a knowledge of your wishes.

Delay is in some instances to be adopted advisedly. It sometimes brings a person to reason when nothing else

could ; when his mind is so occupied with one idea, that he completely over-estimates its relative importance. He can hardly be brought to look at the subject calmly by any force of reasoning. For this disease time is the only doctor.

A good man of business is very watchful, over both himself and others, to prevent things from being carried against his sense of right in moments of lassitude. After a matter has been much discussed, whether to the purpose or not, there comes a time when all parties are anxious that it should be settled ; and there is then some danger of the handiest way of getting rid of the matter being taken for the best.

It is often worth while to bestow much pains in gaining over foolish people to your way of thinking ; and you should do it soon. Your reasons will always have some weight with the wise. But if at first you omit to put your arguments before the foolish, they will form their prejudices ; and a fool is often very consistent, and very fond of repetition. He will be repeating his folly in season and out of season, until at last it has a hearing ; and it is hard if it does not sometimes chime in with the external circumstances.

A man of business should take care to consult occasionally with persons of a nature quite different from his own. To very few are given all the qualities requisite to form a good man of business. Thus a man may have a sternness and the fixedness of purpose so necessary in the conduct of affairs, yet these qualities prevent him, perhaps, from entering into the characters of those about him. He is likely to want tact. He will be unprepared for the extent of versatility and vacillation in other men. But these defects and oversights might be remedied by consulting with persons whom he knows to be possessed of the qualities supplementary to his own. Men of much depth of mind can bear a great deal of

counsel; for it does not easily deface their own character, nor render their purpose indistinct.

*2. Dealing with the Business itself.*

The first thing to be considered in this division of the subject is the collection and arrangement of your materials. Do not fail to begin with the earliest history of the matter under consideration. Be careful not to give way to any particular theory, while you are merely collecting materials lest it should influence you in the choice of them. You must work for yourself; for what you reject may be as important for you to have seen and thought about, as what you adopt; besides, it gives you a command of the subject, and a comparative fearlessness of surprise, which you will never have if you rely on other people for your materials. In some cases, however, you may save time by not labouring much, beforehand, at parts of the subject which are nearly sure to be worked out in discussion.

When you have collected and arranged your information, there comes the task of deciding upon it. To make this less difficult you must use method, and practise economy in thinking. You must not weary yourself by considering the same thing in the same way; just oscillating over it, as it were; seldom making much progress, and not marking the little that you have made. You must not lose your attention in reveries about the subject; but must bring yourself to the point by such questions as the—What has been done? What is the state of the case at present? What can be done next? What ought to be done? Express in writing the answers to your questions. Use the pen—there is no magic in it, but it prevents the mind from staggering about. It forces you to methodise your thoughts. It enables you

to survey the matter with a less tired eye. Whereas in thinking vaguely, you not only lose time, but you acquire a familiarity with the husk of the subject, which is absolutely injurious. Your apprehension becomes dull; you establish associations of ideas which occur again and again to distract your attention; and you become more tired than if you had really been employed in mastering the subject.

When you have arrived at your decision, you have to consider how you shall convey it. In doing this, be sure that you very rarely, if ever, say anything which is not immediately relevant to the subject. Beware of indulging in maxims, in abstract propositions, or in anything of that kind. Let your subject fill the whole of what you say. Human affairs are so wide, subtle, and complicated, that the most sagacious man had better content himself with pronouncing upon those points alone upon which his decision is called for.

It will often be a nice question whether or not to state the motives for your decisions. Much will depend upon the nature of the subject, upon the party whom you have to address, and upon your power of speaking out the whole truth. When you can give all your motives, it will in most cases be just to others, and eventually good for yourself, to do so. If you can only state some of them, then you must consider whether they are likely to mislead, or whether they tend to the full truth. And for your own sake there is this to be considered in giving only a part of your reasons; that those which you give are generally taken to be the whole, or at any rate, the best that you have. And, hereafter, you may find yourself precluded from using an argument which turns out to be a very sound one, which had great weight with you, but which you were at the time unwilling, or did not think it necessary, to put forward.

When you have to communicate the motives for an unfavourable decision, you will naturally study how to convey them so as to give least pain, and to ensure least discussion. These are not unworthy objects; but they are immediate ones, and therefore likely to have their full weight with you. Beware that your anxiety to obtain them does not carry you into an implied falsehood; for, to say the least of it, evil is latent in that. Each day's converse with the world ought to confirm us in the maxim that a bold but not unkind sincerity should be the groundwork of all our dealings.

It will often be necessary to make a general statement respecting the history of some business. It should be lucid, yet not overburdened with details. It must have method not merely running through it, but visible upon it—it must have method in its form. You must build it up, beginning at the beginning, giving each part its due weight, and not hurrying over those steps which happen to be peculiarly familiar to yourself. You must thoroughly enter into the ignorance of others, and so avoid forestalling your conclusions. The best teachers are those who can seem to forget what they know full well; who work out results, which have become axioms in their minds, with all the interest of a beginner, and with footsteps no longer than his.

It is a good practice to draw up, and put on record, an abstract of the reasons upon which you have come to a decision on any complicated subject; so that if it is referred to, there is but little labour in making yourself master of it again. Of course this practice will be more or less necessary, according as your decision has been conveyed with a reserved or with a full statement of the reasons upon which it was grounded.

Of all the correspondence you receive, a concise record should be kept; which should also contain a note of what



was done upon any letter, and of where it was sent to, or put away. Documents relating to the same subject should be carefully brought together. You should endeavour to establish such a system of arranging your papers, as may ensure their being readily referred to, and yet not require too much time and attention to be carried into daily practice. Facsimiles should be kept of all the letters which you send out.

These seem little things ; and so they are, unless you neglect them.

### ON THE CHOICE AND MANAGEMENT OF AGENTS.

THE choice of agents is a difficult matter, but any labour that you may bestow upon it is likely to be well repaid ; for you have to choose persons for whose faults you are to be punished ; to whom you are to be the whipping-boy.

In the choice of an agent, it is not sufficient to ascertain what a man knows, or to make a catalogue of his qualities ; but you have to find out how he will perform a particular service. You may be right in concluding that such an office requires certain qualities, and you may discern that such a man possesses most of them ; and in the absence of any means of making a closer trial, you may have done the best that you could do. But some deficiency, or some untoward combination of these qualities, may unfit him for the office. Hence the value of any opportunity, however slight, of observing his conduct in matters similar to those for which you want him.

Our previous knowledge of men will sometimes mislead us entirely, even when we apply it to circumstances but

little different, as we think, from those in which we have actually observed their behaviour. For instance, you might naturally imagine that a man who shows an irritable temper in his conversation is likely to show a similar temper throughout the conduct of his business. But experience does not confirm this ; for you will often find that men who are intemperate in speech are cautious in writing.

The best agents are, in general, to be found amongst those persons who have a strong sense of responsibility. Under this feeling a man will be likely to grudge no pains ; he will pay attention to minute things ; and, what is of much importance, he will prefer being considered ever so stupid rather than pretend to understand his orders before he does so.

You should behave to your subordinate agents in such a manner that they should not be afraid to be frank with you. They should be able to comment freely upon your directions, and may thus become your best counsellors. For those who are entrusted with the execution of any work are likely to see things which have been overlooked by the person who designed it, however sagacious he may be.

You must not interfere unnecessarily with your agents, as it gives them the habit of leaning too much upon you. Sir Walter Scott says of Canning, " I fear he works himself too hard, under the great error of trying to do too much with his own hand, and to see everything with his own eyes. Whereas the greatest general and the first statesman must, in many cases, be content to use the eyes and fingers of others, and hold themselves contented with the exercise of the greatest care in the choice of implements." Most men of vigorous minds and nice perceptions will be apt to interfere too much ; but it should always be one of the chief objects of a person in authority to train up those around him to do

without him. He should try to give them some self-reliance. It should be his aim to create a standard as to the way in which things ought to be done—not to do them all himself. That standard is likely to be maintained for some time, in case of his absence, illness, or death ; and it will be applied daily to many things that must be done without a careful inspection on his part, even when he is in full vigour.

With respect to those agents whom you employ to represent you, your inclination should be to treat them with hearty confidence. In justice to them, as well as for your own sake, the limits which you lay down for their guidance should be precise. Within those limits you should allow them a large discretionary power. You must be careful not to blame your agent for departing from your orders, when in fact the discrepancy which you notice is nothing more than the usual difference in the ways in which different men set about the same object, even when they employ similar means for its accomplishment. For a difference of this kind you should have been prepared. But if you are in haste to blame your representative, your captiousness may throw a great burden upon him unnecessarily. It is not the success of the undertaking only that he will thenceforward be intent upon : he will be anxious that each step should be done exactly after your fancy. And this may embarrass him, render him indecisive, and lead to his failing altogether.

The surest way to make agents do their work is to show them that their efforts are appreciated with nicety. For this purpose you should not only be very careful in your promotions and rewards, but in your daily dealings with them you should beware of making slight or haphazard criticisms on any of their proceedings. Your praise should not only be right in the substance, but put upon the right

foundation ; it should point to their most strenuous and most judicious exertion. I do not mean that it should always be given at the time of those exertions being made, but it should show that they had not passed by unnoticed.

## ON THE TREATMENT OF SUITORS.

THE maxim, "*Pars beneficii est, quod petitur si bene neget,*" is misinterpreted by many people. They construe "*bene*" *kindly*, which is right ; but they are inclined to fancy that this kindness consists in courtesy, rather than in explicitness and truth.

You should be very loth to encourage expectations in a suitor which you have not then the power of fulfilling, or of putting in a course of fulfilment ;—for Hope, an architect above rules, can build, in reverse, a pyramid upon a point. From a very little origin there often arises a wildness of expectation which quite astounds you. Like the Fisherman in the "*Arabian Nights*," when you see "*a genie twice as high as the greatest of giants,*" you may well wonder how he could have come out of so small a vessel ; but in your case there will be no chance of persuading the monster to ensconce himself again, for the purpose of convincing you that such a feat is not impossible.

In addition also to the natural delusions of hope, there is sometimes the artifice of pretending to take your words for more than they are well known to mean.

There is a deafness peculiar to suitors : they should therefore be answered as much as possible in writing. The answers should be expressed in simple terms ; and all phrases should be avoided which are not likely to convey a clear idea to the man who hears them for the first time.

There are many persons who really do not understand forms of writing which may have become common to you. When they find that courteous expressions mean nothing, they think that a wilful deception has been practised upon them. And in general you should consider that people will naturally put the largest construction upon every ambiguous expression, and every term of courtesy which can be made to express anything at all in their favour.

It will often be necessary to see applicants ; and in this case you must bear in mind that you have not only the delusions of hope and the misinterpretation of language to contend against, but also the imperfection of men's memories. If possible, therefore, do not let the interview be the termination of the matter : let it lead to something in writing, so that you may have an opportunity of recording what you wished to express. Avoid a promising manner ; as people will be apt to find words for it. Do not resort to evasive answers for the purpose only of bringing the interview to a close ; nor shrink from giving a distinct denial, merely because the person to whom you ought to give it is before you, and you would have to witness any pain which it might occasion. Let not that balance of justice which Corruption could not alter one hair's-breadth be altogether disturbed by Sensibility.

To determine in what case the refusal of a suit should be accompanied by reasons is a matter of considerable difficulty. It must depend very much on what portion of the truth you are able to bring forward. This was mentioned before as a general principle in the transaction of business, and it may be well to abide by it in answering applications. You will naturally endeavour to give somewhat of a detailed explanation when you are desirous of showing respect to the person whom you are addressing ; but if the explanation is

not a sound or a complete one, it would be better to see whether the respect could not be shown in some other way.

In many cases, and especially when the suit is a mere project of effrontery, it will perhaps be prudent to refuse, without entering at all upon the grounds of your refusal. In an explanation addressed to the applicant, you will be apt to omit the special reasons for your refusal, as they are likely to be such as would mortify his self-love; and so you lay yourself open to an accusation of unfairness, when he finds, perhaps, that you have selected some other person, who came as fully within the scope of your general objections as he did himself. Therefore, where you are not required, and do not like, to give special reasons, it may often be the best course simply to refuse, or to couch your refusal in impregnable generalities.

Remember that in giving any reason at all for refusing, you lay some foundation for a future request.

Those who have constantly to deal with suitors are in danger of giving way too much to disgust at the intrusion, importunity, and egotism which they meet with. As an antidote to this, they should remember that the suit which is a matter of business to them, and which, perhaps, from its hopelessness, they look upon with little interest, seems to the suitor himself a thing of absorbing importance. And they should expect a man in distress to be as unreasonable as a sick person, and as much occupied by his own disorder.

## INTERVIEWS.

**THERE** is much that cannot be done without interviews. It would often require great labour, not only on your part, but also on the part of others whom you cannot command,

to effect by means of writing what may easily be accomplished in a single interview. The pen may be a surer, but the tongue is a nicer instrument. In talking, most men sooner or later show what is uppermost in their minds; and this gives a peculiar interest to verbal communications. Besides, there are looks, and tones, and gestures, which form a significant language of their own. In short, interviews may be made very useful; and are, in general, somewhat hazardous things; but many people look upon them rather as the pastime of business than as a part of it requiring great discretion.

Interviews are perhaps of most value when they bring together several conflicting interests or opinions, each of which has thus an opportunity of ascertaining the amount and variety of opposition which it must expect, and so is worn into moderation. It would take a great deal of writing to effect this.

Interviews are to be resorted to when you wish to prevent the other party from pledging himself upon a matter which requires much explanation; when you see what will probably be his answer to your first proposition, and know that you have a good rejoinder, which you would wish him to hear before he commits himself by writing upon the subject. In cases of this kind, however, there is the similar danger of a man's talking himself into obstinacy before he has heard all that you have to say.

Interviews are very serviceable in those matters where you would at once be able to come to a decision, if you did not know the real inclination of the other parties concerned; and, in general, you should take care occasionally to see those with whom you are dealing, if the thing in question is likely to be much influenced by their individual peculiarities, and you require a knowledge of the men.

Now this is the case with the greatest part of human affairs.

You frequently want verbal communication in order to encourage the timid, to settle the undecided, and to bring on some definite stage in the proceedings.

The above are instances in which interviews are to be sought for on their own account; but they are sometimes necessary, merely because people will not be satisfied without them. There are persons who can hardly believe that their arguments have been attended to until they have had verbal evidence of the fact. They think that they could easily answer all your objections, and that they should certainly succeed in persuading you, if they had an opportunity of discussing the matter orally; and it may be of importance to remove this delusion by an interview.

On the other hand, interviews are to be avoided, when you have reasons which determine your mind, but which you cannot give to the other party. If you do accede to an interview, you are almost certain to be tempted into giving some reasons, and these not being the strong ones, will very likely admit of a fair answer; and so, after much shuffling, you will be obliged to resort to an appearance of mere wilfulness at last.

You should also be averse to transacting business verbally with very eager, sanguine persons, unless you feel that you have sufficient force and readiness for it. There are people who do not understand any dissent or opposition on your part, unless it is made very manifest. They are fully prepossessed by their own views, and they go on talking as if you agreed with them. Perhaps you feel a delicacy in interrupting them, and undeceiving them at once. The time for doing so passes by; and ever afterwards they quote you as an authority for all their folly. Or



it ends by your going away pledged to a course of conduct which is anything but what you approve.

But perhaps there are no interviews less to be sought after than those in which you have to appear in connection with one or two other parties who have exactly the same interest in the matter as your own, and must be supposed to speak your sentiments, but with whom you have had little or no previous communication; or whose judgment you find that you cannot rely upon. In such a case you are continually in danger of being compromised by the indiscretion of any one of your associates. For you do not like to disown one of your own side before the adverse party; or you are afraid of taking all the odium of opposition on yourself. You may perhaps be quite certain that your indiscreet ally would be as anxious as yourself to recall his words if he could perceive their consequences; but these are things which you cannot explain to him in that company.

The men who profit least by interviews are often those who are most inclined to resort to them. They are irresolute persons, who wish to avoid pledging themselves to anything, and so they choose an interview as the safest course which occurs to them. Besides, it looks like progress; and makes them, as they say, see their way. Such persons, however, are very soon entangled in their own words, or they are oppressed by the earnest opinions of the people they meet. For to conduct an interview in the manner which they intend would require them to have at command that courage and decision which they never attain, without a long and miserly weighing of consequences.

Indolent persons are very apt to resort to interviews; for it saves them the trouble of thinking steadily, and of expressing themselves with precision, which they are called

upon to do, if they come to write about the subject. Now they certainly may learn a great deal in a short time, and with very little trouble, by means of an interview; but if they have to take up the position of an antagonist, of a judge, or indeed any but that of a learner, then it is very unsafe to indulge in an interview, without having prepared themselves for it.

To conduct an interview successfully requires not only information and force of character, but also a certain intellectual readiness. People are so apt to think that there are but two ways in which a thing can terminate. They are ignorant of the number of combinations which even a few circumstances will admit of. And perhaps a proposal is made which they are totally unprepared for, and which they cannot deal with, from being unable to apprehend with sufficient quickness its main drift and consequences.

There are cases where the persons meeting are upon no terms of equality respecting the interview; where one of them has a great deal to maintain, and the other nothing to lose. Such an instance occurs in the case of a minister receiving a deputation. He has the interests of the public to maintain, and the intentions of the Government to keep concealed. He has to show that he fully understands the arguments laid before him, and all the while to conceal his own bias, and to keep himself perfectly free from any pledge. Any member of the deputation may utter anything that he pleases without much harm coming of it; but every word that the minister says is liable to be interpreted against him to the uttermost. There are similar occasions in private life, where a man has to act upon the defensive, and where the interview may be considered not as a battle, but as a siege. A man should then confine himself to few words. He should bring forward his strongest arguments only, and

not state too many of them at a time ; for he should keep a good force in reserve. Besides, it will be much more difficult for the other party to mystify and pervert a few arguments than a set speech. And he will leave them no room for gaining a semblance of victory by answering the unimportant parts of his statement.

Again, whatever readiness and knowledge of the subject he may possess, he should have somebody by him on his side. For he is opposed to numbers, and must expect that amongst them there will always be some one ready to meet his arguments, if not with argument, at any rate with the proper fallacies ; or at least that there will be some one stupid enough to commence replying without an answer. He should therefore have a person who should be able to aid him in replying ; and there will be a satisfaction in having somebody in the room who is not in a hostile position towards him. Besides, he will want a witness ; for he must not imagine that the number of his opponents is any safeguard against misrepresentation, but rather a cause, in most people, of less attention, and less feeling of responsibility. And lastly, the most precise man in the world, if he speaks much on any matter, may be glad to hear what was the impression upon another person's mind ; in short, to see whether he conveyed exactly what he meant to convey.

The best precaution, however, which any man can take under these circumstances, is to state in writing, at the conclusion of the interview, the substance of what he apprehends to have been said, and of what he intends to do. This would require great readiness and the most earnest attention ; but, in the end, it would save very much trouble and misapprehension. A similar practice might be adopted in most interviews of business, where the subject

would warrant such a formality. It would not only be good in itself, but its influence would be felt throughout the interview; and people would come prepared, and would speak with precision, when there was an immediate prospect of their statements being recorded.

OF COUNCILS, COMMISSIONS, AND, IN GENERAL,  
OF BODIES OF MEN CALLED TOGETHER  
TO COUNSEL OR TO DIRECT.

SUCH bodies are the fly-wheels and safety-valves of the machinery of business. They are sometimes looked upon as superfluities, but by their means the motion is equalised, and a great force is applied with little danger.

They are apt contrivances for obtaining an average of opinions, for ensuring freedom from corruption, and the reputation of that freedom. On ordinary occasions they are more courageous than most individuals. They can bear odium better. The world seldom looks to personal character as the predominating cause of any of their doings, though this is one of the first things which occurs to it when the public acts of any individual are in question. The very indistinctness which belongs to their corporate existence adds a certain weight to their decisions.

Councils are serviceable as affording some means of judging how things are likely to be generally received. It is seldom that any one person, however capable he may be of framing, or of executing a good measure, can come to a satisfactory conclusion as to the various appearances which that measure will present, or can be made to present, to others. In some instances he may be so little under the influences of the common prejudices around him, as not to

understand their force, and therefore not to perceive how a new thing will be received. Now, if he has the opportunity of consulting several persons together, he will not only have the advantage of their common sense and joint information, but he will also have a chance of hearing what will be the common nonsense of ordinary men upon the subject, and of providing as far as possible against it.

On the other hand, these bodies are much tempted by the division of responsibility to sloth; and therefore to dealing with things superficially and inaccurately. Another evil is the want of that continuity of purpose in their proceedings which is to be found in those of an individual.

As it tends directly to diminish many of the advantages before mentioned, it is, in general, a wrong thing for a member of a council or commission to let the outer world know that his private opinion is adverse to any of the decisions of his colleagues; or indeed to indicate the part, whatever it may have been, that he has taken in the transactions of the general body.

The proper number of persons to constitute such bodies must vary according to the purpose for which they are called together. Such a number as would afford any temptation for oratorical display should in general be avoided. Another limit, which it may be prudent to adopt, is to have only so many members as to make it possible in most cases for each to take a part in the proceedings. By having a greater number, you will not ensure more scrutiny into the business. It will still be done by a few; but with a feeling of less responsibility than if they were left to themselves, and with the interruptions and inconvenience arising from the number of persons present. Besides, the greater the number, the more likelihood there is of parties being formed in the council.

Whether the members are many or few, there should be formalities, strictly maintained. This is essential in the conduct of business. Otherwise there will be such a state of things as that described by Pepys in his account of a meeting of the Privy Council; which, like most of his descriptions, one feels to be true to the life. "Went to a Committee of the Council to discourse concerning pressing of men; but, Lord! how they meet; never sit down: one comes, now another goes, then comes another; one complaining that nothing is done, another swearing that he hath been there these two hours and nobody come. At last my Lord Annesley says, 'I think we must be forced to get the King to come to every Committee; for I do not see that we do anything at any time but when he is here.'"

The great art of making use of councils, commissions, and such-like bodies, is to know what kind of matter to put before them, and in what state to present it. "There be three parts of business, the preparation; the debate, or examination; and the perfection; whereof, if you look for dispatch, let the middle only be the work of many, and the first and last the work of few."<sup>1</sup>

There is likely to be a great waste of time and labour when a thing is brought in all its first vagueness to be debated or examined by a number of persons. And there will be much in the "preparation" and "perfection" of a matter which will only become confused by being submitted to a full assembly. You might as well think of making love by a council or a board. It should therefore be the business of some one, either in the council or subordinate to it, to bring the matter forward in a distinct and definite shape. Otherwise there will be a wilderness of things said before you arrive at any legitimate point of discussion. And

<sup>1</sup> Bacon's *Essay on Dispatch*.

hence Bacon adds, "The proceeding upon somewhat conceived in writing doth for the most part facilitate dispatch ; for though it should be wholly rejected, yet that negative is more pregnant of direction than an indefinite, as ashes are more generative than the dust."

In order to bring the responsibility of any act of the general body home to the individuals composing it, no method seems so good as that of requiring the signatures of a large proportion of the council or commission to the directions given in the matter. Even the most careless people have a sort of aversion to signing things which they have never considered. This plan is better than requiring the signatures of the whole body. For it is less likely to degenerate into a mere formality ; and, besides, the other course would give any one crotchety man too great a power of hindrance.

The responsibility, also, of those persons who settle the details of a matter, whether secretaries, or committees of the council, should be clearly attested either by their signatures, or by a memorandum showing what part of the business has been entrusted to them.

As to the kind of men to be specially chosen or rejected, it would be trifling to lay down any minute rules. You often require a diversity of natures, in order that the various modes of acting congenial to different minds and tempers should have an opportunity of being canvassed.

When a man's faults are those which come to the surface in social life, they must be noted as certain hindrances to his usefulness as a member of any of these bodies. A man may be proud or selfish, and yet a good councillor ; he may be secretly ill-tempered, and yet a reasonable man in his converse with the world, capable of bearing opposition, and an excellent coadjutor ; but if he is vain, or fond of disputes,

or dictatorial, you know that his efficiency in a council must to a certain extent be counteracted.

Those men are the grace and strength of councils who are of that healthful nature which is content to take defeat with good humour, and of that practical turn of mind which makes them set heartily to work upon plans and propositions which have been originated in opposition to their judgment ; who are not anxious to shift responsibility upon others ; and who do not allude to their former objections with triumph, when those objections come to be borne out by the result. In acting with such persons you are at your ease. You counsel sincerely and boldly, and not with a timorous regard to your own part in the matter.

The men who have method, and, as it were, a judicial intellect, are most valuable councillors. Without some such in a council, a great deal of cleverness goes for nothing ; as there is nobody to see what has been stated and answered, to what their deliberations tend, and what progress has been made. Such persons can gather the sense of a mixed assembly, and suggest some line of action which may honestly meet the different views of the various members. They will bring back the subject-matter when it has all but floated away, while the others have been looking for seaweed, or throwing stones at one another on the shore.

### PARTY-SPIRIT.

PARTY-SPIRIT gives a pretext for the exercise of such scorn and malice as could not be tolerated if they did not claim to have their origin in fervent wishes for the public welfare. It consumes in idle contests that energy which the State has need of. By the perpetual interchange of hard names it



tends to make a people suspicious and uncharitable ; or it inclines them to think lightly of the kind of offences which they hear so often charged against their most eminent public men ; or it “ gives them a habit of using epithets and affecting sensations of moral indignation which bear no proportion to the thing itself, or to their own real feelings about the thing ; of taking the names of Truth and Virtue in vain.”

Under the influence of party-spirit, a nation sometimes acts towards its dependencies, and in its foreign relations, not with the whole force of the country, but with a portion of it only, bearing some reference to the excess of strength in the ruling party.

Party-spirit makes people abjure independent thinking. It can leave nothing alone. It must uplift a hand in every man's quarrel, as a knight-errant of old, but with small sense of chivalry. It forces its odious friendship or its unprovoked hostility where neither is fitting. Even the wisest require to be constantly on their guard against it ; or its insidious prejudices, like dirt and insects on the glass of a telescope, will blur the view, and make them see strange monsters where there are none.

Party-spirit incites people to attack with rashness, and to defend without sincerity. Violent partisans are apt to treat a political opponent in such a manner, when they argue with him, so as to make the question quite personal, as if he had been present, as it were, and a chief agent in all the crimes which they attribute to his party. Nor does the accused hesitate to take the matter upon himself, and, in fancied self-defence, to justify things which otherwise he would not hesitate, for one moment, to condemn.

These evils must not be allowed to take shelter under the unfounded supposition that party dealings are different from anything else in the world, and that they are to be

governed by much looser laws than those which regulate any other human affairs. It is a very dangerous thing to acknowledge two sorts of truth, two kinds of charity.

Is there no harm in never looking further than the worst motive that can possibly be imagined for the actions of our political adversaries? Are we to consider the opposite party as so many Samaritans; and is there nothing that we have ever heard or read which should induce us to abate our Jewish antipathy to these brethren of ours who do not worship at our temple? This is an illustration from which political bigots cannot escape. Even their own pretensions of being always in the right will only bring the instance more home to them. The Jews were right about the matter in dispute between them and the Samaritans. "Salvation is with the Jews." But this is never held out to us as any justification of their behaviour.

To hear some men talk one would suppose that political distinctions were natural distinctions; and that they depended upon a man's personal qualities. These people seem to think that all the good are ranged in a row on one side, and all the bad on the other. Now the utmost that can reasonably be alleged is, that there exists in most men a predisposition to one or other of the two great parties which are to be found in every free country; but this cannot be depended upon as the cause which determines men in general to attach themselves to a party.

As it is, some range themselves on one side, and some on the other, just as they used to do in their school games, and with about as much reflection. A large number of persons, in all ranks, hold hereditary opinions. There are thousands who make their convictions on all political subjects subservient to their feelings as members of a class, and to what they believe to be the interests of that class.

Then there are those who think whatever the little mob in which they live pleases to think ; and this is the most comfortable way of thinking. Direct self-interest decides some men. The merest accidents determine others. For instance, how much of a man's opinions through life will depend upon any strong-minded or earnest person that he may have lived with at a time when he was uninformed himself and malleable. Remember, too, that it requires but a slight bias to send a man into a party; for let him agree with it only in a few points, and he will be set down as belonging to it. Then, perhaps, he is called upon to act in some way or other politically, and a very little determines a man whose thoughts upon the subject altogether have been few and vague. Thus a political character is impressed upon him without his having had much to do in the matter; but afterwards many things will probably occur to deepen that impression, and to make him a decided partisan.

A true analysis of the composition of parties would afford a good lesson of political tolerance. We should learn from it what a mixed thing a party is : that there is no single law that will explain its cohesion; and still less is there any good ground for insisting that the distinctions of party have their origin in moral worth or turpitude.

It is of importance that we should train ourselves to make the fitting allowance for the political prejudices of others.

Pascal asks, "Whence comes it to pass that we have so much patience with those who are maimed in body, and so little with those who are defective in mind?" And he says, "It is because the cripple acknowledges that we have the use of our legs; whereas the fool obstinately maintains that we are the persons who halt in understanding. Without this difference in the case, neither object would move our resentment, but both our compassion." We might try to

overlook this difference, and find it an aid to charity to consider that men's prejudices are the same kind of things as their personal defects. Whether a man is labouring under some degree of physical deafness, or under some strong prejudice, which, being ever by his side, is always sure of the first hearing, and produces a sort of numbness to anything else: it comes nearly to the same thing as regards the weight which he is likely to attach to any of our arguments, when adverse to his prejudice. In both cases the cause is decided without our being fully heard.

But at the same time that we have recourse to such views as the above, to moderate our impatience of other people's prejudices, we should keep a vigilant watch on our own. We often forget that we are partisans ourselves, and that we are contending with partisans. We first give ourselves credit for a judicial impartiality in all that concerns public affairs, and then call upon our opponents actually to be as impartial as we assert ourselves to be. But few of us, I suspect, have any right to take this high ground. Our passions master us; and we know them to be our enemies. Our prejudices imprison us; and, like madmen, we take our jailors for a guard of honour.

I do not mean to suggest that truth and right are always to be found in middle courses; or that there is anything particularly philosophic in concluding that "both parties are in the wrong," and "that there is a great deal to be said on both sides of the question,"—phrases which may belong to indolence as well as to charity and candour. Let a man have a hearty strong opinion, and strive by all fair means to bring it into action—if it is, in truth, an opinion, and not a thing inhaled like some infectious disorder.

Many persons persuade themselves that the life and well-being of a State are something like their own fleeting health

and brief prosperity. And hence they see portentous things in every subject of political dispute. Such fancies add much to the intolerance of party-spirit. But the State will bear much killing. It has outlived many generations of political prophets—and it may survive the present ones.

Divisions in a State are a necessary consequence of freedom ; and the practical question is not to dispense with party, but to make the most good of it. The contest must exist ; but it may have something of generosity in it. And how is this to be ? Not by the better kind of men abstaining from any attention to politics, or shunning party connections altogether. Staying away from a danger which in many instances it is their duty to face, would be but a poor way of keeping themselves safe. It would be a doubtful policy to encourage political indifference as a cure for the evils of party-spirit, even if it were a certain cure ; but we cannot take this for granted, especially when we observe that the vices of party are not always to be seen most in those who have the most earnest political feelings. Indeed, the attachment to a party may be, and often is, an affection of the most generous kind ; and it must, I think, be allowed, that even with men who do not discern the true end of party, nor its limits, party-spirit is often a rude kind of patriotism.

The question, then, is how to regulate party-spirit. Like all other affections, its tendency is to overspread the whole character. One who has nothing in his soul to resist it, or much that assimilates with its worst influences, is carried away by it to evil. But a good man will show the earnestness of his attachment to his party by his endeavour to elevate its character ; and in the utmost heat of party contests he will try to maintain a love of truth, and a regard for the charities of life.

*FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.*



# FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.

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## CHAPTER I.

NONE but those who, like myself, have once lived in intellectual society, and then have been deprived of it for years, can appreciate the delight of finding it again. Not that I have any right to complain, if I were fated to live as a recluse for ever. I can add little, or nothing, to the pleasure of any company ; I like to listen rather than to talk ; and when anything apposite does occur to me, it is generally the day after the conversation has taken place. I do not, however, love good talk the less for these defects of mine ; and I console myself with thinking that I sustain the part of a judicious listener, not always an easy one.

Great, then, was my delight at hearing last year that my old pupil, Milverton, had taken a house which had long been vacant in our neighbourhood. To add to my pleasure, his college friend, Ellesmere, the great lawyer, also an old pupil of mine, came to us frequently in the course of the autumn. Milverton was at that time writing some essays which he occasionally read to Ellesmere and myself. The conversations which then took place I am proud to say that I have chronicled.



I think they must be interesting to the world in general, though of course not so much so as to me.

Milverton and Ellesmere were my favourite pupils. Many is the heartache I have had at finding that those boys, with all their abilities, would do nothing at the University. But it was in vain to urge them. I grieve to say that neither of them had any ambition of the right kind. Once I thought I had stimulated Ellesmere to the proper care and exertion ; when, to my astonishment and vexation, going into his rooms about a month before an examination, I found that, instead of getting up his subjects, like a reasonable man, he was absolutely endeavouring to invent some new method for proving something which had been proved before in a hundred ways. Over this he had wasted two days, and from that moment I saw it was useless to waste any more of my time and patience in urging a scholar so indocile for the beaten path.

What tricks he and Milverton used to play me, pretending not to understand my demonstration of some mathematical problem, inventing all manner of subtle difficulties, and declaring they could not go on while these stumbling-blocks lay in their way ! But I am getting into college gossip, which may in no way delight my readers. And I am fancying, too, that Milverton and Ellesmere are the boys they were to me ; but I am now the child to them. During the years that I have been quietly living here, they have become versed in the ways of the busy world. And though they never think of asserting their superiority, I feel it, and am glad to do so.

My readers would, perhaps, like me to tell them something of the characters of Ellesmere and Milverton ; but it would ill become me to give that insight into them, which I, their college friend and tutor, imagine I have obtained.

Their friendship I could never understand. It was not on the surface very warm, and their congeniality seemed to result more from one or two large common principles of thought than from any peculiar similarity of taste, or from great affection on either side. Yet I should wrong their friendship if I were to represent it otherwise than a most true-hearted one; more so, perhaps, than some of softer texture. What needs be seen of them individually will be by their words, which I hope I have in the main retained.

The place where we generally met in fine weather was on the lawn before Milverton's house. It was an eminence which commanded a series of valleys sloping towards the sea. And, as the sea was not more than nine miles off, it was a matter of frequent speculation with us whether the landscape was bounded by air or water. In the first valley was a little town of red brick houses, with poplars coming up amongst them. The ruins of a castle, and some water which, in olden times, had been the lake in "the pleasaunce," were between us and the town. The clang of an anvil, or the clamour of a horn, or busy wheelwright's sounds, came faintly up to us when the wind was south.

I must not delay my readers longer with my gossip, but bring them at once into the conversation that preceded our first reading.

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*Milverton.* I tell you, Ellesmere, these are the only heights I care to look down from, the heights of natural scenery.

*Ellesmere.* Pooh! my dear Milverton, it is only because the particular mounds which the world calls heights, you think you have found out to be but larger ant-heaps. Whenever you have cared about anything, a man more fierce and unphilosophical in the pursuit of it I never saw. To

influence men's minds by writing for them, is that no ambition?

*Milverton.* It may be, but I have it not. Let any kind critic convince me that what I am now doing is useless, or has been done before, or that, if I leave it undone, some one else will do it to my mind; and I should fold up my papers, and watch the turnips grow in that field there, with a placidity that would, perhaps, seem very spiritless to your now restless and ambitious nature, Ellesmere.

*Ellesmere.* If something were to happen which will not, then—O Philosophy, Philosophy, you, too, are a good old nurse, and rattle your rattles for your little people, as well as old Dame World can do for hers. But what are we to have to-day for our first reading?

*Milverton.* An Essay on Truth.

*Ellesmere.* Well, had I known this before, it is not the novelty of the subject which would have dragged me up the hill to your house. By the way, philosophers ought not to live upon hills. They are much more accessible, and I think quite as reasonable, when, Diogenes-like, they live in tubs upon flat ground. Now for the essay.

### TRUTH.

Truth is a subject which men will not suffer to grow old. Each age has to fight with its own falsehoods: each man with his love of saying to himself and those around him pleasant things and things serviceable for to-day, rather than the things which are. Yet a child appreciates at once the divine necessity for truth; never asks, "What harm is there in saying the thing that is not?" and an old man finds, in his growing experience, wider and wider applications of the great doctrine and discipline of truth.

Truth needs the wisdom of the serpent as well as the simplicity of the dove. He has gone but a little way in this matter who supposes that it is an easy thing for a man to speak the truth, "the thing he troweth;" and that it is a casual function, which may be fulfilled at once after any lapse of exercise. But, in the first place, the man who would speak truth must know what he troweth. To do that, he must have an uncorrupted judgment. By this is not meant a perfect judgment or even a wise one, but one which, however it may be biassed, is not bought—is still a judgment. But some people's judgments are so entirely gained over by vanity, selfishness, passion, or inflated prejudices and fancies long indulged in; or they have the habit of looking at everything so carelessly, that they see nothing truly. They cannot interpret the world of reality. And this is the saddest form of lying, "the lie that sinketh in," as Bacon says, which becomes part of the character and goes on eating the rest away.

Again, to speak truth, a man must not only have that martial courage which goes out, with sound of drum and trumpet, to do and suffer great things; but that domestic courage which compels him to utter small sounding truths in spite of present inconvenience and outraged sensitiveness or sensibility. Then he must not be in any respect a slave to self-interest. Often it seems as if but a little misrepresentation would gain a great good for us; or, perhaps, we have only to conceal some trifling thing, which, if told, might hinder unreasonably, as we think, a profitable bargain. The true man takes care to tell, notwithstanding. When we think that truth interferes at one time or another with all a man's likings, hatings, and wishes, we must admit, I think, that it is the most comprehensive and varied form of self-denial.

Then, in addition to these great qualities, truth-telling in its highest sense requires a well-balanced mind. For instance, much exaggeration, perhaps the most, is occasioned by an impatient and easily moved temperament which longs to convey its own vivid impressions to other minds, and seeks by amplifying to gain the full measure of their sympathy. But a true man does not think what his hearers are feeling, but what he is saying.

More stress might be laid than has been on the intellectual requisites for truth, which are probably the best part of intellectual cultivation; and as much caused by truth as causing it. But, putting the requisites for truth at the fewest, see of how large a portion of the character truth is the resultant. If you were to make a list of those persons accounted the religious men of their respective ages, you would have a ludicrous combination of characters essentially dissimilar. But true people are kindred. Mention the eminently true men, and you will find that they are a brotherhood. There is a family likeness throughout them.

If we consider the occasions of exercising truthfulness and descend to particulars, we may divide the matter into the following heads:—Truth to oneself—truth to mankind in general—truth in social relations—truth in business—truth in pleasure.

1. *Truth to oneself.*—All men have a deep interest that each man should tell himself the truth. Not only will he become a better man, but he will understand them better. If men knew themselves, they could not be intolerant to others.

It is scarcely necessary to say much about the advantage of a man knowing himself for himself. To get at the truth

of any history is good ; but a man's own history—when he reads that truly, and, without a mean and over-solicitous introspection, knows what he is about and what he has been about, it is a Bible to him. “And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned before the Lord.” David knew the truth about himself. But truth to oneself is not merely truth about oneself. It consists in maintaining an openness and justness of soul which brings a man into relation with all truth. For this, all the senses, if you might so call them, of the soul must be uninjured—that is, the affections and the perceptions must be just. For a man to speak the truth to himself comprehends all goodness ; and for us mortals can only be an aim.

2. *Truth to mankind in general.*—This is a matter which, as I read it, concerns only the higher natures. Suffice it to say, that the withholding large truths from the world may be a betrayal of the greatest trust.

3. *Truth in social relations.*—Under this head come the practices of making speech vary according to the person spoken to ; of pretending to agree with the world when you do not ; of not acting according to what is your deliberate and well-advised opinion, because some mischief may be made of it by persons whose judgment in this matter you do not respect ; of maintaining a wrong course for the sake of consistency ; of encouraging the show of intimacy with those whom you never can be intimate with ; and many things of the same kind. These practices have elements of charity and prudence as well as fear and meanness in them. Let those parts which correspond to fear and meanness be put aside. Charity and prudence are not parasitical plants which require boles of falsehood to climb up upon. It is

often extremely difficult in the mixed things of this world to act truly and kindly too ; but therein lies one of the great trials of man, that his sincerity should have kindness in it, and his kindness truth.

4. *Truth in business.*—The more truth you can get into any business, the better. Let the other side know the defects of yours, let them know how you are to be satisfied, let there be as little to be found as possible (I should say nothing), and if your business be an honest one, it will be best tended in this way. The talking, bargaining, and delaying that would thus be needless, the little that would then have to be done over again, the anxiety that would be put aside, would even in a worldly way be “great gain.” It is not, perhaps, too much to say, that the third part of men’s lives is wasted by the effect, direct or indirect, of falsehoods.

Still, let us not be swift to imagine that lies are never of any service. A recent Prime Minister said that he did not know about truth always prevailing, and the like ; but lies had been very successful against his government. And this was true enough. Every lie has its day. There is no preternatural inefficacy in it by reason of its falseness. And this is especially the case with those vague injurious reports which are no man’s lies, but all men’s carelessness. But even as regards special and unmistakable falsehood, we must admit that it has its success. A complete being might deceive with wonderful effect ; however, as nature is always against a liar, it is great odds in the case of ordinary mortals. Wolsey talks of

“Negligence  
Fit for a fool to fall by,”

when he gives Henry the wrong packet ; but the Cardinal was quite mistaken. That kind of negligence was just the thing of which far-seeing and thoughtful men are capable, and which, if there were no higher motive, should induce them to rely on truth alone. A very close vulpine nature, all eyes, all ears, may succeed better in deceit. But it is a sleepless business. Yet, strange to say, it is had recourse to in the most spendthrift fashion, as the first and easiest thing that comes to hand.

In connection with truth in business, it may be observed that if you are a truthful man, you should be watchful over those whom you employ ; for your subordinate agents are often fond of lying for your interests, as they think. Show them at once that you do not think with them, and that you will disconcert any of their inventions by breaking in with the truth. If you suffer the fear of seeming unkind to prevent your thrusting well-meant inventions aside, you may get as much pledged to falsehoods as if you had coined and uttered them yourself.

5. *Truth in pleasure.*—Men have been said to be sincere in their pleasures ; but this is only that the taste and habits of men are more easily discernible in pleasure than in business. The want of truth is as great a hindrance to the one as to the other. Indeed, there is so much insincerity and formality in the pleasurable department of human life, especially in social pleasures, that instead of a bloom there is a slime upon it, which deadens and corrupts the thing. One of the most comical sights to superior beings must be to see two human creatures with elaborate speech and gestures making each other exquisitely uncomfortable from civility : the one pressing what he is most anxious that the other should not accept, and the other



accepting only from the fear of giving offence by refusal. There is an element of charity in all this too ; and it will be the business of a just and refined nature to be sincere and considerate at the same time. This will be better done by enlarging our sympathy, so that more things and people are pleasant to us, than by increasing the civil and conventional part of our nature, so that we are able to do more seeming with greater skill and endurance. Of other false hindrances to pleasure, such as ostentation and pretences of all kinds, there is neither charity nor comfort in them. They may be got rid of altogether, and no moaning made over them. Truth, which is one of the largest creatures, opens out the way to the heights of enjoyment, as well as to the depths of self-denial.

It is difficult to think too highly of the merits and delights of truth ; but there is often in men's minds an exaggerated notion of some bit of truth, which proves a great assistance to falsehood. For instance, the shame of some particular small falsehood, exaggeration, or insincerity, becomes a bugbear which scares a man into a career of false dealing. He has begun making a furrow a little out of the line, and he ploughs on in it to try and give some consistency and meaning to it. He wants almost to persuade himself that it was not wrong, and entirely to hide the wrongness from others. This is a tribute to the majesty of truth ; also to the world's opinion about truth. It proceeds, too, upon the notion that all falsehoods are equal, which is not the case ; or on some fond craving for a show of perfection, which is sometimes very inimical to the reality. The practical, as well as the high-minded, view in such cases, is for a man to think how he can be true now. To attain that, it may, even for this world, be worth while

for a man to admit that he is inconsistent, and even that he has been untrue. His hearers, did they know anything of themselves, would be fully aware that he was not singular, except in the courage of owning his insincerity.

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*Ellesmere.* That last part requires thinking about. If you were to permit men, without great loss of reputation, to own that they had been insincere, you might break down some of that majesty of truth you talk about. And bad men might avail themselves of any facilities of owning insincerity, to commit more of it. I can imagine that the apprehension of this might restrain a man from making any such admission as you allude to, even if he could make up his mind to do it otherwise.

*Milverton.* Yes; but can anything be worse than a man going on in a false course? Each man must look to his own truthfulness, and keep that up as well as he can, even at the risk of saying or doing something which may be turned to ill account by others. We may think too much about this reflection of our external selves. Let the real self be right. I am not so fanciful as to expect men to go about clamouring that they have been false; but at no risk of letting people see that, or of even being obliged to own it, should they persevere in it.

*Dunsford.* Milverton is right, I think.

*Ellesmere.* Do not imagine that I am behind either of you in a wish to hold up truth. My only doubt was as to the mode. For my own part, I have such faith in truth that I take it mere concealment is in most cases a mischief. And I should say, for instance, that a wise man would be sorry that his fellows should think better of him than he deserves. By the way, that is a reason why I should not

like to be a writer of moral essays, Milverton—one should be supposed to be so very good.

*Milverton.* Only by thoughtless people then. There is a saying given to Rousseau, not that he ever did say it, for I believe it was a misprint, but it was a possible saying for him, “Chaque homme qui pense est méchant.” Now, without going the length of this aphorism, we may say that what has been well written has been well suffered.

“He best can paint them who has felt them most.”

And so, though we should not exactly declare that writers who have had much moral influence have been wicked men, yet we may admit that they have been amongst the most struggling, which implies anything but serene self-possession and perfect spotlessness. If you take the great ones, Luther, Shakespeare, Goethe, you see this at once.

*Dunsford.* David, St. Paul.

*Milverton.* Such men are like great rocks on the seashore. By their resistance, terraces of level land are formed; but the rocks themselves bear many scars and ugly indents, while the sea of human difficulty presents the same unwrinkled appearance in all ages. Yet it has been driven back.

*Ellesmere.* But has it lost any of its bulk, or only gone elsewhere? One part of the resemblance certainly is that these same rocks, which were bulwarks, become, in their turn, dangers.

*Milverton.* Yes, there is always loss in that way. It is seldom given to man to do unmixed good. But it was not this aspect of the simile that I was thinking of: it was the scarred appearance.

*Dunsford.* Scars not always of defeat or flight ; scars in the front.

*Milverton.* Ah, it hardly does for us to talk of victory or defeat, in these cases ; but we may look at the contest itself as something not bad, terminate how it may. We lament over a man's sorrows, struggles, disasters, and short-comings ; yet they were possessions too. We talk of the origin of evil and the permission of evil. But what is evil ? We mostly speak of sufferings and trials as good, perhaps, in their result ; but we hardly admit that they may be good in themselves. Yet they are knowledge—how else to be acquired, unless by making men as gods, enabling them to understand without experience. All that men go through may be absolutely the best for them—no such thing as evil, at least in our customary meaning of the word. But, you will say, they might have been created different and higher. See where this leads to. Any sentient being may set up the same claim : a fly that it had not been made a man ; and so the end would be that each would complain of not being all.

*Ellesmere.* Say it all over again, my dear Milverton ; it is rather hard. [Milverton did so, in nearly the same words.] I think I have heard it all before. But you may have it as you please. I do not say this irreverently, but the truth is, I am too old and too earthly to enter upon these subjects. I think, however, that the view is a stout-hearted one. It is somewhat in the same vein of thought that you see in Carlyle's works about the contempt of happiness. But in all these cases, one is apt to think of the sage in *Rasselas*, who is very wise about human misery till he loses his daughter. Your fly illustration has something in it. Certainly when men talk big about what might have been done for man, they omit to think what might be said. on

similar grounds, for each sentient creature in the universe. But here have we been meandering off into origin of evil, and uses of great men, and wickedness of writers, etc., whereas I meant to have said something about the essay. How would you answer what Bacon maintains? "A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure."

*Milverton.* He is not speaking of the lies of social life, but of self-deception. He goes on to class under that head "vain opinions, flattering hopes, false valuations, imaginations as one would." These things are the sweetness of "the lie that sinketh in." Many a man has a kind of mental kaleidoscope, where the bits of broken glass are his own merits and fortunes, and they fall into harmonious arrangements and delight him—often most mischievously and to his ultimate detriment, but they are a present pleasure.

*Ellesmere.* Well, I am going to be true in my pleasures; to take a long walk alone. I have got a difficult case for an opinion, which I must go and think over.

*Dunsford.* Shall we have another reading to-morrow?

*Milverton.* Yes, if you are both in the humour for it.

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## CHAPTER II.

As the next day was fine, we agreed to have our reading in the same spot that I have described before. There was scarcely any conversation worth noting, until after Milverton had read us the following essay on Conformity.

## CONFORMITY.

The conformity of men is often a far poorer thing than that which resembles it amongst the lower animals. The monkey imitates from imitative skill and gamesomeness; the sheep is gregarious, having no sufficient will to form an independent project of its own. But man often loathes what he imitates, and conforms to what he knows to be wrong.

It will ever be one of the nicest problems for a man to solve how far he shall profit by the thoughts of other men, and not be enslaved by them. He comes into the world, and finds swaddling clothes ready for his mind as well as his body. There is a vast scheme of social machinery set up about him; and he has to discern how he can make it work with him and for him, without becoming part of the machinery itself. In this lie the anguish and the struggle of the greatest minds. Most sad are they, having mostly the deepest sympathies, when they find themselves breaking off from communion with other minds. They would go on, if they could, with the opinions around them. But, happily, there is something to which a man owes a larger allegiance than to any human affection. He would be content to go away from a false thing, or quietly to protest against it; but in spite of him the strife in his heart breaks into burning utterance by word or deed.

Few, however, are those who venture, even for the shortest time, into that hazy world of independent thought, where a man is not upheld by a crowd of other men's opinions, but where he must find a footing of his own. Among the mass of men, there is little or no resistance to conformity.

Could the history of opinions be fully written, it would be seen how large a part in human proceedings the love of conformity, or rather the fear of non-conformity, has occasioned. It has triumphed over all other fears; over love, hate, pity, sloth, anger, truth, pride, comfort, self-interest, vanity, and maternal love. It has torn down the sense of beauty in the human soul, and set up in its place little ugly idols which it compels us to worship with more than Japanese devotion. It has contradicted Nature in the most obvious things, and been listened to with abject submission. Its empire has been no less extensive than deep-seated. The serf to custom points his finger at the slave to fashion—as if it signified whether it is an old or a new thing which is irrationally conformed to. The man of letters despises both the slaves of fashion and of custom, but often runs his narrow career of thought, shut up, though he sees it not, within close walls which he does not venture even to peep over.

It is hard to say in what department of human thought and endeavour conformity has triumphed most. Religion comes to one's mind first; and well it may when one thinks what men have conformed to in all ages in that matter. If we pass to art, or science, we shall see there too the wondrous slavery which men have endured—from puny fetters, moreover, which one stirring thought would, as we think, have burst asunder. The above, however, are matters not within every one's cognisance; some of them are shut in by learning or the show of it; and plain “practical” men would say, they follow where they have no business but to follow. But the way in which the human body shall be covered is not a thing for the scientific and the learned only; and is allowed on all hands to concern, in no small degree, one half at least of the creation. It is

in such a simple thing as dress that each of us may form some estimate of the extent of conformity in the world. A wise nation, unsubdued by superstition, with the collected experience of peaceful ages, concludes that female feet are to be clothed by crushing them. The still wiser nations of the west have adopted a swifter mode of destroying health, and creating angularity, by crushing the upper part of the female body. In such matters nearly all people conform. Our brother man is seldom so bitter against us, as when we refuse to adopt at once his notions of the infinite. But even religious dissent were less dangerous and more respectable than dissent in dress. If you want to see what men will do in the way of conformity, take a European hat for your subject of meditation. I dare say there are twenty-two millions of people at this minute each wearing one of these hats in order to please the rest. As in the fine arts, and in architecture, especially, so in dress, something is often retained that was useful when something else was beside it. To go to architecture for an instance, a pinnacle is retained, not that it is of any use where it is, but in another kind of building it would have been. That style of building, as a whole, has gone out of fashion, but the pinnacle has somehow or other kept its ground and must be there, no one insolently going back to first principles and asking what is the use and object of building pinnacles. Similar instances in dress will occur to my readers. Some of us are not skilled in such affairs; but looking at old pictures, we may sometimes see how modern clothes have attained their present pitch of frightfulness and inconvenience. This matter of dress is one in which, perhaps, you might expect the wise to conform to the foolish; and they have.

When we have once come to a right estimate of the strength of conformity, we shall, I think, be more kindly



disposed to eccentricity than we usually are. Even a wilful or an absurd eccentricity is some support against the weighty common-place conformity of the world. If it were not for some singular people who persist in thinking for themselves, in seeing for themselves, and in being comfortable, we should all collapse into a hideous uniformity.

It is worth while to analyse that influence of the world which is the right arm of conformity. Some persons bend to the world in all things, from an innocent belief that what so many people think must be right. Others have a vague fear of the world as of some wild beast which may spring out upon them at any time. Tell them they are safe in their houses from this myriad-eyed creature; they still are sure that they shall meet with it some day, and would propitiate its favour at any sacrifice. Many men contract their idea of the world to their own circle, and what they imagine to be said in that circle of friends and acquaintances is their idea of public opinion—"as if," to use a saying of Southey's, "a number of worldlings made a world." With some unfortunate people, the much dreaded "world" shrinks into one person of more mental power than their own, or perhaps merely of coarser nature; and the fancy as to what this person will say about anything they do, sits upon them like a nightmare. Happy the man who can embark his small adventure of deeds and thoughts upon the shallow waters round his home, or send them afloat on the wide sea of humanity, with no great anxiety in either case as to what reception they may meet with! He would have them steer by the stars, and take what wind may come to them.

A reasonable watchfulness against conformity will not lead a man to spurn the aid of other men, still less to reject the accumulated mental capital of ages. It does not compel

us to dote upon the advantages of saving life. We would not forego the hard-earned gains of civil society because there is something in most of them which tends to contract the natural powers, although it vastly aids them. We would not, for instance, return to the monosyllabic utterance of barbarous men, because in any formed language there are a thousand snares for the understanding. Yet we must be most watchful of them. And in all things a man must beware of so conforming himself as to crush his nature and forego the purpose of his being. We must look to other standards than what men may say or think. We must not abjectly bow down before rules and usages; but must refer to principles and purposes. In few words, we must think, not whom we are following, but what we are doing. If not, why are we gifted with individual life at all? Uniformity does not consist with the higher forms of vitality. Even the leaves of the same tree are said to differ, each one from all the rest. And can it be good for the soul of a man "with a biography of his own like to no one else's," to subject itself without thought to the opinions and ways of others; not to grow into symmetry, but to be moulded down into conformity?

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*Ellesmere.* Well, I rather like that essay. I was afraid, at first, it was going to have more of the fault into which you essay writers generally fall, of being a comment on the abuse of a thing, and not on the thing itself. There always seems to me to want another essay on the other side. But I think, at the end, you protect yourself against misconstruction. In the spirit of the essay, you know, of course, that I quite agree with you. Indeed, I differ from all the ordinary biographers of that independent gentleman, Don't Care. I believe Don't Care came to a good end. At any

rate he came to some end. Whereas numbers of people never have beginning, or ending, of their own. An obscure dramatist, Milverton, whom we know of, makes one of his characters say, in reply to some world-fearing wretch—

“ While you, you think  
What others think, or what you think they'll say,  
Shaping your course by something scarce more tangible  
Than dreams, at best the shadows on the stream  
Of aspen leaves by flickering breezes swayed—  
Load me with irons, drive me from morn till night,  
I am not the utter slave which that man is  
Whose sole word, thought, and deed are built on what  
The world may say of him.”

*Milverton.* Never mind the obscure dramatist. But, Ellesmere, you really are unreasonable, if you suppose that, in the limits of a short essay, you can accurately distinguish all you write between the use and the abuse of a thing. The question is, will people misunderstand you—not, is the language such as to be logically impregnable? Now, in the present case, no man will really suppose it is a wise and just conformity that I am inveighing against.

*Ellesmere.* I am not sure of that. If everybody is to have independent thought, would there not be a fearful instability and want of compactness? Another thing, too—conformity often saves so much time and trouble.

*Milverton.* Yes; it has its uses. I do not mean, in the world of opinion and morality, that it should be all elasticity and no gravitation; but at least enough elasticity to preserve natural form and independent being.

*Ellesmere.* I think it would have been better if you had turned the essay another way, and instead of making it on conformity, had made it on interference. That is the greater mischief and the greater folly, I think. Why do

people unreasonably conform? Because they feel unreasonable interference. War, I say, is interference on a small scale compared with the interference of private life. Then the absurdity on which it proceeds; that men are all alike, or that it is desirable that they should be; and that what is good for one is good for all.

*Dunsford.* I must say, I think, Milverton, you do not give enough credit for sympathy, good-nature, and humility as material elements in the conformity of the world.

*Ellesmere.* I am not afraid, my dear Dunsford, of the essay doing much harm. There is a power of sleepy conformity in the world. You may just startle your conformists for a minute, but they gravitate into their old way very soon. You talk of their humility, Dunsford, but I have heard people who have conformed to opinions, without a pretence of investigation, as arrogant and intolerant towards anybody who differed from them as if they stood upon a pinnacle of independent sagacity and research.

*Dunsford.* One never knows, Ellesmere, on which side you are. I thought you were on mine a minute or two ago; and now you come down upon me with more than Milverton's anti-conforming spirit.

*Ellesmere.* The greatest mischief, as I take it, of this slavish conformity, is in the reticence it creates. People will be, what are called, intimate friends, and yet no real interchange of opinion takes place between them. A man keeps his doubts, his difficulties, and his peculiar opinions to himself. He is afraid of letting anybody know that he does not exactly agree with the world's theories on all points. There is no telling the hindrance that this is to truth.

*Milverton.* A great cause of this, Ellesmere, is in the little reliance you can have on any man's secrecy. A man

finds that what, in the heat of discussion, and in the perfect carelessness of friendship, he has said to his friend, is quoted to people whom he would never have said it to; knowing that it would be sure to be misunderstood, or half-understood, by them. And so he grows cautious; and is very loth to communicate to anybody his more cherished opinions, unless they fall in exactly with the stream. Added to which, I think there is in these times less than there ever was of a proselytising spirit; and people are content to keep their opinions to themselves—more perhaps from indifference than from fear.

*Ellesmere.* Yes, I agree with you.

By the way, I think your taking dress as an illustration of extreme conformity is not bad. Really it is wonderful the degree of square and dull hideousness to which, in the process of time and tailoring, and by severe conformity, the human creature's outward appearance has arrived. Look at a crowd of men from a height, what an ugly set of ants they appear! Myself, when I see an Eastern man, one of the people attached to their embassies, sweeping by us in something flowing and stately, I feel inclined to take off my hat to him (only that I think the hat might frighten him), and say, Here is a great, unhatted, uncravated, bearded man, not a creature clipt and twisted and tortured into tailorhood.

*Dunsford.* Ellesmere broke in upon me just now, so that I did not say all that I meant to say. But, Milverton, what would you admit that we are to conform to? In silencing the general voice, may we not give too much opportunity to our own headstrong suggestions, and to wilful licence?

*Milverton.* Yes; to be somewhat deaf to the din of the world may be no gain, even loss, if then we only listen

more to the worst part of ourselves; but in itself it is a good thing to silence that din. It is at least a beginning of good. If anything good is then gained, it is not a sheepish tendency, but an independent resolve growing out of our nature. And, after all, when we talk of non-conformity, it may only be that we non-conform to the immediate sect of thought or action about us, to conform to a much wider thing in human nature.

*Ellesmere.* Ah, me! how one wants a moral essayist always at hand to enable one to make use of moral essays.

*Milverton.* Your rules of law are grand things—the proverbs of justice; yet has not each case its specialities, requiring to be argued with much circumstance, and capable of different interpretations? Words cannot be made into men.

*Dunsford.* I wonder you answer his sneers, Milverton.

*Ellesmere.* I must go and see whether words cannot be made into guineas; and then guineas into men is an easy thing. These trains will not wait even for critics, so, for the present, good-bye.

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### CHAPTER III.

ELLESMERE soon wrote us word that he would be able to come down again; and I agreed to be at Worth-Ashton (Milverton's house) on the day of his arrival. I had scarcely seated myself at our usual place of meeting before the friends entered, and after greeting me, the conversation thus began—

*Ellesmere.* Upon my word, you people who live in the

country have a pleasant time of it. As Milverton was driving me from the station through Durley Wood, there was such a rich smell of pines, such a twittering of birds, so much joy, sunshine, and beauty, that I began to think, if there were no such place as London, it really would be very desirable to live in the country.

*Milverton.* What a climax! But I am always very suspicious, when Ellesmere appears to be carried away by any enthusiasm, that it will break off suddenly, like the gallop of a post-horse.

*Dunsford.* Well, what are we to have for our essay?

*Milverton.* Despair.

*Ellesmere.* I feel equal to anything just now, and so, if it must be read sometime or other, let us have it now.

*Milverton.* You need not be afraid. I want to take away, not to add gloom. Shall I read?

~~We assented, and he began.~~

## DESPAIR.

Despair may be serviceable when it arises from a temporary prostration of spirits; during which the mind is insensibly healing, and her scattered power silently returning. This is better than to be the sport of a teasing hope without reason. But to indulge in despair as a habit is slothful, cowardly, short-sighted; and manifestly tends against Nature. Despair is then the paralysis of the soul.

These are the principal causes of despair—remorse, the sorrows of the affections, worldly trouble, morbid views of religion, native melancholy.

## REMORSE.

Remorse does but add to the evil which bred it, when it promotes, not penitence, but despair. To have erred in one branch of our duties does not unfit us for the performance of all the rest, unless we suffer the dark spot to spread over our whole nature, which may happen almost unobserved in the torpor of despair. This kind of despair is chiefly grounded on a foolish belief that individual words or actions constitute the whole life of man; whereas they are often not fair representatives of portions even of that life. The fragments of rock in a mountain stream may tell much of its history, are in fact results of its doings, but they are not the stream. They were brought down when it was turbid; it may now be clear: they are as much the result of other circumstances as of the action of the stream; their history is fitful; they give us no sure intelligence of the future course of the stream, or of the nature of its waters; and may scarcely show more than that it has not been always as it is. The actions of men are often but little better indications of the men themselves.

A prolonged despair arising from remorse is unreasonable at any age, but if possible still more so when felt by the young. To think, for example, that the great Being who made us could have made eternal ruin and misery inevitable to a poor, half-fledged creature of eighteen or nineteen! And yet how often has the profoundest despair from remorse brooded over children of that age and eaten into their hearts!

There is frequently much selfishness about remorse. Put what has been done at the worst. Let a man see his own evil word, or deed, in full light, and own it to be black as



hell itself. He is still here. He cannot be isolated. There still remain for him cares and duties; and, therefore, hopes. Let him not in imagination link all creation to his fate. Let him yet live in the welfare of others, and, if it may be so, work out his own in this way; if not, be content with theirs. The saddest cause of remorseful despair is when a man does something expressly contrary to his character: when an honourable man, for instance, slides into some dishonourable action; or a tender-hearted man falls into cruelty from carelessness; or, as often happens, a sensitive nature continues to give the greatest pain to others from temper, feeling all the time, perhaps, more deeply than the persons aggrieved. All these cases may be summed up in the words, "That which I would not, that I do," the saddest of all human confessions, made by one of the greatest men. However, the evil cannot be mended by despair. Hope and humility are the only supports under this burden. As Mr. Carlyle says—

"What are faults, what are the outward details of a life; if the inner secret of it, the remorse, temptations, true, often-baffled, never-ended struggle of it, be forgotten. 'It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' Of all acts, is not, for a man, *repentance* the most divine? The deadliest sin, I say, were that same supercilious consciousness of no sin; that is death: the heart so conscious is divorced from sincerity, humility, and fact; is dead: it is 'pure' as dead dry sand is pure. David's life and history, as written for us in those Psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given of a man's moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will ever discern in it the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul towards what is good and best. Struggle often baffled, sore baffled, down as into entire wreck; yet a struggle never ended; ever, with tears, repentance, true unconquerable purpose, begun anew. Poor human nature! is not a man's walking, in truth, always that: a 'succession of falls!' Man can do no other. In this wild element of a Life, he has to struggle onwards; now fallen, deep abased; and ever, with tears, repentance,

with bleeding heart, he has to rise again, struggle again still onwards. That his struggle *be* a faithful unconquerable one: this is the question of questions."

#### THE SORROWS OF THE AFFECTIONS.

The loss by death of those we love has the first place in these sorrows. Yet the feeling in this case, even when carried to the highest, is not exactly despair, having too much warmth in it for that. Not much can be said in the way of comfort on this head. Queen Elizabeth, in her hard, wise way, writing to a mother who had lost her son, tells her that she will be comforted in time; and why should she not do for herself what the mere lapse of time will do for her? Brave words! and the stern woman, more earnest than the sage in *Rasselas*, would have tried their virtue on herself. But I fear they fell somewhat coldly on the mother's ear. Happily, in these bereavements, kind Nature with her opiates, day by day administered, does more than all the skill of the physician moralists. Sir Thomas Browne says—

"Darkness and light divide the course of time, and oblivion shares with memory a great part even of our living beings; we slightly remember our felicities, and the smartest strokes of affliction leave but short smart upon us. Sense endureth no extremities, and sorrows destroy us or themselves. To weep into stones are fables. Afflictions induce callosities, miseries are slippery, or fall like snow upon us, which, notwithstanding, is no unhappy stupidity. To be ignorant of evils to come, and forgetful of evils past, is a merciful provision in Nature, whereby we digest the mixture of our few and evil days, and our delivered senses not relapsing into cutting remembrances, our sorrows are not kept raw by the edge of repetitions."

The good knight thus makes much comfort out of our physical weakness. But something may be done in a very

different direction, namely, by spiritual strength. By elevating and purifying the sorrow, we may take it more out of matter, as it were, and so feel less the loss of what is material about it.

The other sorrows of the affections which may produce despair are those in which the affections are wounded, as jealousy, love unrequited, friendship betrayed, and the like. As, in despair from remorse, the whole life seems to be involved in one action : so in the despair we are now considering, the whole life appears to be shut up in the one unpropitious affection. Yet human nature, if fairly treated, is too large a thing to be suppressed into despair by one affection, however potent. We might imagine that if there were anything that would rob life of its strength and favour, it is domestic unhappiness. And yet how numerous is the bond of those whom we know to have been eminently unhappy in some domestic relation, but whose lives have been full of vigorous and kindly action. Indeed, the culture of the world has been largely carried on by such men. As long as there is life in the plant, though it be sadly pent in, it will grow towards any opening of light that is left for it.

#### WORLDLY TROUBLE.

This appears to mean a subject for despair, or, at least, unworthy of having any remedy, or soothing thought out of it. Whether a man lives in a large room or a small one, rides or is obliged to walk, gets a plenteous dinner every day, or a sparing one, do not seem matters for despair. But the truth is, that worldly trouble, such, for instance, as loss of fortune, is seldom the simple thing that poets would persuade us.

“ The little or the much she gave is quietly resigned ;  
Content with poverty, my soul I arm,  
And virtue, though in rags, will keep me warm.”

So sings Dryden, paraphrasing Horace, but each of them, with their knowledge of the world, cross-questioned in prose, could have told us how the stings of fortune really are felt. The truth is, that fortune is not exactly a distinct isolated thing which can be taken away—“and there an end.” But much has to be severed, with undoubted pain in the operation. A man mostly feels that his reputation for sagacity, often his honour, the comfort, too, or supposed comfort, of others are embarked in his fortunes. Mere stoicism, and resolves about fitting fortune to oneself, not oneself to fortune, though good things enough in their way, will not always meet the whole of the case. And a man who could bear personal distress of any kind with Spartan indifference, may suffer himself to be overwhelmed by despair growing out of worldly trouble. A frequent origin of such despair, as indeed of all despair (not by any means excluding despair from remorse), is pride. Let a man say to himself, “I am not the perfect character I meant to be; this is not the conduct I had imagined for myself; these are not the fortunate circumstances I had always intended to be surrounded by.” Let him at once admit that he is on a lower level than his ideal one; and then see what is to be done there. This seems the best way of treating all that part of worldly trouble which consists of self-reproval. We scarcely know of any outward life continuously prosperous (and a very dull one it would be): why should we expect the inner life to be one course of unbroken self-improvement, either in prudence or in virtue.

Before a man gives way to excessive grief about the

fortunes of his family being lost with his own, he should think whether he really knows wherein lies the welfare of others. Give him some fairy power, inexhaustible purses or magic lamps, not, however, applying to the mind; and see whether he could make those whom he would favour good or happy. In the East they have a proverb of this kind, Happy are the children of those fathers who go to the Evil One. But for anything that our Western experience shows, the proverb might be reversed, and, instead of running thus, Happy are the sons of those who have got money anyhow, it might be, Happy are the sons of those who have failed in getting money. In fact, there is no sound proverb to be made about it either way. We know nothing about the matter. Our surest influence for good or evil over others is through themselves. Our ignorance of what is physically good for any man may surely prevent anything like despair with regard to that part of the fortunes of others dear to us, which, as we think, is bound up with our own.

#### MORBID VIEWS OF RELIGION.

As religion is the most engrossing subject that can be presented to us, it will be considered in all states of mind and by all minds. It is impossible but that the most hideous and perverted views of religion must arise. To combat the particular views which may be supposed to cause religious despair would be too theological an undertaking for this essay. One thing only occurs to me to say, namely, that the lives and the mode of speaking about themselves adopted by the founders of Christianity afford the best contradiction to religious melancholy that I believe can be met with.

## NATIVE MELANCHOLY.

There is such a thing. Jacques, without the "sundry contemplation" of his travels, or any "simples" to "compound" his melancholy form, would have ever been wrapped in a "most humorous sadness." It was innate. This melancholy may lay its votaries open to any other cause of despair, but having mostly some touch of philosophy (if it be not absolutely morbid), it is not unlikely to preserve them from any extremity. It is not acute, but chronic.

It may be said in its favour that it tends to make men indifferent to their own fortunes. But then the sorrow of the world presses more deeply upon them. With large open hearts, the untowardness of things present, the miseries of the past, the mischief, stupidity, and error which reign in the world, at times almost crush your melancholy men. Still, out of their sadness may come their strength, or, at least, the best direction of it. Nothing, perhaps, is lost; not even sin—much less sorrow.

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*Ellesmere.* I am glad you have ended as you have; for, previously, you seemed to make too much of getting rid of all distress of mind. I always liked that passage in "Philip van Artevelde," where Father John says—

"He that lacks time to mourn, lacks time to mend.  
Eternity mourns that."

You have a better memory than I have; how does it go on?

*Milverton.*

"'Tis an ill cure  
For life's worst ills, to have no time to feel them.  
Where sorrow's held intrusive and turned out,  
There wisdom will not enter, nor true power,  
Nor aught that dignifies humanity."

Still this does not justify despair, which was what I was writing about.

*Ellesmere.* Perhaps it was not a just criticism of mine. One part of the subject you have certainly omitted. You do not tell us how much there often is of physical disorder in despair. I dare say you will think it a coarse and unromantic mode of looking at things; but I must confess I agree with what Leigh Hunt has said somewhere, that one can walk down distress of mind—even remorse, perhaps.

*Milverton.* Yes; I am for the Peripatetics against all other philosophers.

*Ellesmere.* By the way, there is a passage in one of Hazlitt's essays I thought of while you were reading, about remorse and religious melancholy. He speaks of mixing up religion and morality; and then goes on to say that Calvinistic notions have obscured and prevented self-knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The passage which must have been alluded to is this: "The stricter tenets of Calvinism, which allow no medium between grace and reprobation, and doom man to eternal punishment for every breach of the moral law, as an equal offence against Infinite truth and justice, proceed (like the paradoxical doctrine of the Stoics) from taking a half-view of this subject, and considering man as amenable only to the dictates of his understanding and his conscience, and not excusable from the temptations and frailty of human ignorance and passion. The mixing up of religion and morality together, or the making us accountable for every word, thought, or action, under no less a responsibility than our everlasting future welfare or misery, has also added incalculably to the difficulties of self-knowledge, has superinduced a violent and spurious state of feeling, and made it almost impossible to distinguish the boundaries between the true and false, in judging of human conduct and motives. A religious man is afraid of looking into the state of his soul, lest at the same time he should reveal it to heaven; and tries to persuade himself that by shutting his eyes to his true character and feelings, they will remain a profound secret, both here and hereafter.

Give me the essay—there is a passage I want to look at. This comparison of life to a mountain stream, the rocks brought down by it being the actions, is too much worked out. When we speak of similes not going on four legs, it implies, I think, that a simile is at best but a four-legged animal. Now this is almost a centipede of a simile. I think I have had the same thought as yours here, and I have compared the life of an individual to a curve. You both smile. Now I thought that Dunsford at any rate would be pleased with this reminiscence of college days. But to proceed with my curve. You may have numbers of the points through which it passes given, and yet know nothing of the nature of the curve itself. See, now, it shall pass through here and here, but how it will go in the interval, what is the law of its being, we know not. But this simile would be too mathematical, I fear.

*Milverton.* I hold to the centipede.

*Ellesmere.* Not a word has Dunsford said all this time.

*Dunsford.* I like the essay. I was not criticising as we went along, but thinking that perhaps the greatest charm of books is, that we see in them that other men have suffered what we have. Some souls we ever find who could have responded to all our agony, be it what it may. This at least robs misery of its loneliness.

*Ellesmere.* On the other hand, the charm of intercourse with our fellows, when we are in sadness, is that they do not reflect it in any way. Each keeps his own trouble to himself, and often pretending to think and care about other things, comes to do so for the time.

*Dunsford.* Well, but you might choose books which would not reflect your troubles.

*Ellesmere.* But the fact of having to make a choice to do this does away, perhaps, with some part of the benefit:



whereas, in intercourse with living men, you take what you find, and you find that neither your trouble, nor any likeness of it, is absorbing other people. But this is not the whole reason: the truth is, the life and impulses of other men are catching; you cannot explain exactly how it is that they take you out of yourself.

*Milverton.* No man is so confidential as when he is addressing the whole world. You find, therefore, more comfort for sorrow in books than in social intercourse. I mean more direct comfort; for I agree with what Ellesmere says about society.

*Ellesmere.* In comparing men and books, one must always remember this important distinction—that one can put the books down at any time. As Macaulay says, “Plato is never sullen. Cervantes is never petulant. Demosthenes never comes unseasonably. Dante never stays too long.”

*Milverton.* Besides, one can manage to agree so well, intellectually, with a book; and intellectual differences are the source of half the quarrels in the world.

*Ellesmere.* Judicious shelving!

*Milverton.* Judicious skipping will nearly do. Now when one’s friend, or oneself, is crotchety, dogmatic, or disputatious, one cannot turn over to another day.

*Ellesmere.* Don’t go, Dunsford. Here is a passage in the essay I meant to have said something about—“why should we expect the inner life to be one course of unbroken self-improvement,” etc.—You recollect? Well, it puts me in mind of a conversation between a complacent poplar and a grim old oak, which I overheard the other day. The poplar said that it grew up quite straight, heavenwards, that all its branches pointed the same way, and always had done so. Turning to the oak, which it had been talking at before for

some time, the poplar went on to remark, that it did not wish to say anything unfriendly to a brother of the forest, but those warped and twisted branches seemed to show strange struggles. The tall thing concluded its oration by saying, that it grew up very fast, and that when it had done growing, it did not suffer itself to be made into huge floating engines of destruction. But different trees had different tastes. There was then a sound from the old oak, like an "ah" or a "whew," or, perhaps, it was only the wind amongst its resisting branches; and the gaunt creature said that it had had ugly winds from without and cross-grained impulses from within; that it knew it had thrown out awkwardly a branch here and a branch there, which would never come quite right again it feared; that men worked it up, sometimes for good and sometimes for evil—but that at any rate it had not lived for nothing. The poplar began again immediately, for this kind of tree can talk for ever, but I patted the old oak approvingly and went on.

*Milverton.* Well, your trees divide their discourse somewhat Ellesmerically: they do not talk with the simplicity La Fontaine's would; but there is a good deal in them. They are not altogether sappy.

*Ellesmere.* I really thought of this fable of mine the other day, as I was passing the poplar at the end of the valley, and I determined to give it you on the first occasion.

*Dunsford.* I hope, Ellesmere, you do not intend to put sarcastic notions into the sap of our trees hereabouts. There's enough of sarcasm in you to season a whole forest.

*Ellesmere.* Dunsford is afraid of what the trees may say to the country gentlemen, and whether they will be able to answer them. I will be careful not to make the trees too clever.

*Milverton.* Let us go and try if we can hear any more forest talk. The winds, shaped into voices by the leaves, say many things to us at all times.

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## CHAPTER IV.

IN the course of our walk Milverton promised to read the following essay on Recreation the next day. I have no note of anything that was said before the reading.

### RECREATION.

This subject has not had the thought it merits. It seems trivial. It concerns some hours in the daily life of each of us; but it is not connected with any subject of human grandeur, and we are rather ashamed of it. Schiller has some wise, but hard words that relate to it. He perceives the pre-eminence of the Greeks, who could do many things. He finds that modern men are units of great nations; but not great units themselves. And there is some room for this reasoning of his.

Our modern system of division of labour divides wits also. The more necessity there is, therefore, for finding in recreation something to expand men's intelligence. There are intellectual pursuits almost as much divided as pin-making; and many a man goes through some intellectual process, for the greater part of his working hours, which corresponds with the making of a pin's head. Must there not be some danger of a general contraction of mind from this convergence of attention upon something very small, for so considerable a portion of a man's life?

What answer can civilisation give to this? It can say that greater results are worked out by the modern system; that though each man is doing less himself than he might have done in former days, he sees greater and better things accomplished; and that his thoughts, not bound down by his petty occupation, travel over the work of the human family. There is a great deal, doubtless, in this argument; but man is not altogether an intellectual recipient. He is a constructive animal also. It is not the knowledge that you can pour into him that will satisfy him, or enable him to work out his nature. He must see things for himself; he must have bodily work and intellectual work different from his bread-getting work; or he runs the danger of becoming a contracted pedant with a poor mind and a sickly body.

I have seen it quoted from Aristotle, that the end of labour is to gain leisure. It is a great saying. We have in modern times a totally wrong view of the matter. Noble work is a noble thing, but not all work. Most people seem to think that any business is in itself something grand; that to be intensely employed, for instance, about something which has no truth, beauty, or usefulness in it, which makes no man happier or wiser, is still the perfection of human endeavour, so that the work be intense. It is the intensity, not the nature, of the work that men praise. You see the extent of this feeling in little things. People are so ashamed of being caught for a moment idle, that if you come upon the most industrious servants or workmen whilst they are standing looking at something which interests them, or fairly resting, they move off in a fright, as if they were proved, by a moment's relaxation, to be neglectful of their work. Yet it is the result that they should mainly be judged by, and to which they should appeal. But amongst all classes, the working itself, incessant working, is the thing

deified. Now what is the end and object of most work? To provide for animal wants. Not a contemptible thing\* by any means, but still it is not all in all with man. Moreover, in those cases where the pressure of bread-getting is fairly past, we do not often find men's exertions lessened on that account. There enter into their minds as motives, ambition, a love of hoarding, or a fear of leisure—things which, in moderation, may be defended or even justified; but which are not so peremptory, and upon the face of them excellent, that they at once dignify excessive labour.

The truth is, that to work insatiably requires much less mind than to work judiciously, and less courage than to refuse work that cannot be done honestly. For a hundred men whose appetite for work can be driven on by vanity, avarice, ambition, or a mistaken notion of advancing their families, there is about one who is desirous of expanding his own nature and the nature of others in all directions, of cultivating many pursuits, of bringing himself and those around him in contact with the universe in many points, of being a man and not a machine.

It may seem as if the preceding arguments were directed rather against excessive work than in favour of recreation. But the first object in an essay of this kind should be to bring down the absurd estimate that is often formed of mere work. What ritual is to the formalist, or contemplation to the devotee, business is to the man of the world. He thinks he cannot be doing wrong as long as he is doing that.

No doubt hard work is a great police agent. If everybody were worked from morning till night and then carefully locked up, the register of crimes might be greatly diminished. But what would become of human nature? Where would be the room for growth in such a system of

things? It is through sorrow and mirth, plenty and need, a variety of passions, circumstances, and temptations, even through sin and misery, that men's natures are developed.

Again, there are people who would say, "Labour is not all; we do not object to the cessation of labour—a mere provision for bodily ends; but we fear the lightness and vanity of what you call recreation." Do these people take heed of the swiftness of thought—of the impatience of thought? What will the great mass of men be thinking of, if they are taught to shun amusements and the thoughts of amusement? If any sensuality is left open to them, they will think of that. If not sensuality, then avarice, or ferocity for "the cause of God," as they would call it. People who have had nothing else to amuse them have been very apt to indulge themselves in the excitement of persecuting their fellow-creatures.

Our nation, the northern part of it especially, is given to believe in the sovereign efficacy of dulness. To be sure, dulness and solid vice are apt to go hand in hand. But then, according to our notions, dulness is in itself so good a thing—almost a religion.

Now, if ever a people required to be amused, it is we sad-hearted Anglo-Saxons. Heavy eaters, hard thinkers, often given up to a peculiar melancholy of our own, with a climate that for months together would frown away mirth if it could—many of us with very gloomy thoughts about our hereafter—if ever there were a people who should avoid increasing their dulness by all work and no play, we are that people. "They took their pleasure sadly," says Froissart, "after their fashion." We need not ask of what nation Froissart was speaking.

There is a theory which has done singular mischief to

the cause of recreation and of general cultivation. It is that men cannot excel in more things than one ; and that if they can, they had better be quiet about it. "Avoid music, do not cultivate art, be not known to excel in any craft but your own," says many a worldly parent, thereby laying the foundation of a narrow, greedy character, and destroying means of happiness and of improvement which success, or even real excellence, in one profession only cannot give. This is, indeed, a sacrifice of the end of living for the means.

Another check to recreation is the narrow way in which people have hitherto been brought up at schools and colleges. The classics are pre-eminent works. To acquire an accurate knowledge of them is an admirable discipline. Still, it would be well to give a youth but few of these great works, and so leave time for various arts, accomplishments, and knowledge of external things exemplified by other means than books. If this cannot be done but by over-working, then it had better not be done ; for of all things, that must be avoided. But surely it can be done. At present, many a man who is versed in Greek metre, and afterwards full of law reports, is childishy ignorant of Nature. Let him walk with an intelligent child for a morning, and the child will ask him a hundred questions about sun, moon, stars, plants, birds, building, farming, and the like, to which he can give very sorry answers, if any ; or, at the best, he has but a second-hand acquaintance with Nature. Men's conceits are his main knowledge. Whereas, if he had any pursuits connected with Nature, all Nature is in harmony with it, is brought into his presence by it, and it affords at once cultivation and recreation.

But, independently of those cultivated pursuits which form a high order of recreation, boyhood should never pass

without the boy's learning several modes of recreation of the humbler kind. A parent or teacher seldom does a kinder thing by the child under his care than when he instructs it in some manly exercise, some pursuit connected with Nature out of doors, or even some domestic game. In hours of fatigue, anxiety, sickness, or worldly ferment, such means of amusement may delight the grown-up man when other things would fail.

An indirect advantage, but a very considerable one, attendant upon various modes of recreation, is, that they provide opportunities of excelling in something to boys and men who are dull in things which form the staple of education. A boy cannot see much difference between the nominative and the genitive cases—still less any occasion for aorists—but he is a good hand at some game or other; and he keeps up his self-respect, and the respect of others for him, upon his prowess in that game. He is better and happier on that account. And it is well, too, that the little world around him should know that excellence is not all of one form.

There are no details about recreation in this essay, the object here being mainly to show the worth of recreation, and to defend it against objections from the over-busy and the over-strict. The sense of the beautiful, the desire for comprehending Nature, the love of personal skill and prowess, are not things implanted in men merely to be absorbed in producing and distributing the objects of our most obvious animal wants. If civilisation required this, civilisation would be a failure. Still less should we fancy that we are serving the cause of godliness when we are discouraging recreation. Let us be hearty in our pleasures, as in our work, and not think that the gracious Being who has made us so open-hearted to delight, looks with dissatisfaction at our enjoyment, as a hard task-master might, who



in the glee of his slaves could see only a hindrance to their profitable working. And with reference to our individual cultivation, we may remember that we are not here to promote incalculable quantities of law, physic, or manufactured goods, but to become men, not narrow pedants, but wide-seeing, mind-travelled men. Who are the men of history to be admired most? Those whom most things became—who could be weighty in debate, of much device in council, considerate in a sick-room, genial at a feast, joyous at a festival, capable of discourse with many minds, large-souled, not to be shrivelled up into any one form, fashion, or temperament. Their contemporaries would have told us that men might have various accomplishments and hearty enjoyments, and not for that be the less effective in business, or less active in benevolence. I distrust the wisdom of asceticism as much as I do that of sensuality; Simeon Stylites no less than Sardanapalus.

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*Ellesmere.* You alluded to Schiller at the beginning of the essay: can you show me his own words? I have a lawyer's liking for the best evidence.

*Milverton.* When we go in, I will show you some passages which bear me out in what I have made him say—at least, if the translation is faithful.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This was one of the passages which Milverton afterwards read to us:—

“Thus, however much may be gained for the world as a whole by this fragmentary cultivation, it is not to be denied that the individuals whom it befalls are cursed for the benefit of the world. An athletic frame, it is true, is fashioned by gymnastic exercises; but a form of beauty only by free and uniform action. Just so the exertions of single talents can create extraordinary men indeed; but happy and perfect men only by their uniform temperature. And in what relation should

*Ellesmere.* I have had a great respect for Schiller ever since I heard that saying of his about death, "Death cannot be an evil, for it is universal."

*Dunsford.* Very noble and full of faith.

*Ellesmere.* Touching the essay, I like it well enough; but, perhaps, people will expect to find more about recreation itself—not only about the good of it, but what it is, and how it is to be got.

*Milverton.* I do not incline to go into detail about the matter. The object was to say something for the respectability of recreation, not to write a chapter of a book of sports. People must find out their own ways of amusing themselves.

*Ellesmere.* I will tell you what is the paramount thing to be attended to in all amusements—that they should be short. Moralists are always talking about "short-lived" pleasures; would that they were!

*Dunsford.* Hesiod told the world, some two thousand years ago, how much greater the half is than the whole.

*Ellesmere.* Dinner-givers and managers of theatres should

we stand, then, to the past and coming ages, if the cultivation of human nature made necessary such a sacrifice? We should have been the slaves of humanity, and drudged for her century after century, and stamped upon our mutilated natures the humiliating traces of our bondage—that the coming race might nurse its moral healthfulness in blissful leisure, and unfold the free growth of its humanity!

"But can it be intended that man should neglect himself for any particular design? Ought Nature to deprive us, by its design, of a perfection which Reason, by its own, prescribes to us? Then it must be false that the development of single faculties makes the sacrifice of totality necessary; or, if indeed the law of Nature presses thus heavily, it becomes us to restore, by a higher art, this totality in our nature which art has destroyed."—*The Philosophical and Aesthetical Letters and Essays of Schiller, Translated by J. Weiss*, pp. 74, 75.

forthwith be made aware of that fact. What a sacrifice of good things, and of the patience and comfort of human beings, a cumbrous modern dinner is! I always long to get up and walk about.

*Dunsford.* Do not talk of modern dinners. Think what a Roman dinner must have been.

*Milverton.* Very true. It has always struck me that there is something quite military in the sensualism of the Romans—an “arbiter bibendi” chosen, and the whole feast moving on with fearful precision and apparatus of all kinds. Come, come! the world’s improving, Ellesmere.

*Ellesmere.* Had the Romans public dinners? Answer me that. Imagine a Roman, whose theory, at least, of a dinner was that it was a thing for enjoyment, whereas we often look on it as a continuation of the business of the day—I say, imagine a Roman girding himself up, literally girding himself up to make an after-dinner speech.

*Milverton.* I must allow that is rather a barbarous practice.

*Ellesmere.* If charity, or politics, cannot be done without such things, I suppose they are useful in their way; but let nobody ever imagine that they are a form of pleasure. People smearing each other over with stupid flattery, and most of the company being in dread of receiving some compliment which should oblige them to speak!

*Dunsford.* I should have thought, now, that you would always have had something to say, and therefore that you would not be so bitter against after-dinner speaking.

*Ellesmere.* No; when I have nothing to say, I can say nothing.

*Milverton.* Would it not be a pleasant thing if rich people would ask their friends sometimes to public amusements—order a play for them, for instance—or at any rate, provide

some manifest amusement? They might, occasionally with great advantage, abridge the expense of their dinners, and throw it into other channels of hospitality.

*Ellesmere.* Ah, if they would have good acting at their houses, that would be very delightful; but I cannot say that the being taken to any place of public amusement would much delight me. By the way, Milverton, what do you say of theatres in the way of recreation? This decline of the drama, too, is a thing you must have thought about: let us hear your notions.

*Milverton.* I think one of the causes sometimes assigned, that reading is more spread, is a true and an important one; but, otherwise, I fancy that the present decline of the drama depends upon very small things which might be remedied. As to a love of the drama going out of the human heart, that is all nonsense. Put it at the lowest, what a great pleasure it is to hear a good play read. And again, as to serious pursuits unfitting men for dramatic entertainments, it is quite the contrary. A man, wearied with care and business, would find more change of ideas with less fatigue, in seeing a good play, than in almost any other way of amusing himself.

*Dunsford.* What are the causes, then, of the decline of the drama?

*Milverton.* In England, or rather in London,—for London is England for dramatic purposes; in London, then, theatrical arrangements seem to be framed to drive away people of sense. The noisome atmosphere, the difficult approach, the over-size of the great theatres, the intolerable length of performances.

*Ellesmere.* Hear! hear!

*Milverton.* The crowding together of theatres in one part of the town, the lateness of the hours——

*Ellesmere.* The folly of the audience, who always applaud in the wrong place——

*Dunsford.* There is no occasion to say any more ; I am quite convinced.

*Milverton.* But these annoyances need not be. Build a theatre of modern dimensions ; give it great facility of approach ; take care that the performances never exceed three hours ; let lions and dwarfs pass by without any endeavour to get them within the walls ; lay aside all ambition of making stage waves which may almost equal real Ramsgate waves to our cockney apprehensions. Of course there must be good players and good plays.

*Ellesmere.* Now we come to the part of Hamlet.

*Milverton.* Good players and good plays are both to be had if there were good demand for them. But, I was going to say, let there be all these things, especially let there be complete ventilation, and the theatre will have the most abundant success. Why, that one thing alone, the villainous atmosphere at most public places, is enough to daunt any sensible man from going to them.

*Dunsford.* There should be such a choice of plays—not merely Chamberlain-clipt—as any man or woman could go to.

*Milverton.* There should be certainly, but how is such a choice to be made, if the people who could regulate it, for the most part, stay away ? It is a dangerous thing, the better classes leaving any great source of amusement and instruction wholly, or greatly, to the less refined classes.

*Dunsford.* Yes, I must confess it is.

Great part of your arguments apply to musical as well as to theatrical entertainments. Do you find similar results with respect to them ?

*Milverton.* Why, they are not attended by any means

as they would be, or made what they might be, if the objections I mentioned were removed.

*Dunsford.* What do you say to the out-of-door entertainments for a town population?

*Milverton.* As I said before, my dear Dunsford, I cannot give you a chapter of a "Book of Sports." There ought, of course, to be parks for all quarters of the town; and I confess it would please me better to see, in holiday times and hours of leisure, hearty games going on in these parks, than a number of people sauntering about in uncomfortably new and unaccustomed clothes.

*Ellesmere.* Do you not see, Dunsford, that, like a cautious official man, he does not want to enter into small details, which have always an air of ridicule? He is not prepared to pledge himself to cricket, golf, football, or prisoner's bars; but in his heart he is manifestly a Young Englander—without the white waistcoat. Nothing would please him better than to see in large letters, on one of those advertising vans, "Great match! Victoria Park!! Eleven of Fleet Street against the Eleven of Saffron Hill!!!"

*Milverton.* Well, there is a great deal in the spirit of Young England that I like very much, indeed that I respect.

*Ellesmere.* I should like the Young England party better myself if I were quite sure there was no connection between them and a clan of sour, pity-mongering people, who wash one away with eternal talk about the contrast between riches and poverty; with whom a poor man is always virtuous; and who would, if they could, make him as envious and as discontented as possible.

*Milverton.* Nothing can be more strikingly in contrast with such thinkers than Young England. Young

Englanders, according to the best of their theories, ought to be men of warm sympathy with all classes. There is no doubt of this, that very seldom does any good thing arise, but there comes an ugly phantom of a caricature of it, which sidles up against the reality, mounds its favourite words as a third-rate actor does a great part, under-mimics its wisdom, over-acts its folly, is by half the world taken for it, goes some way to suppress it in its own time, and, perhaps, lives for it in history.

*Ellesmere.* Well brought out, that metaphor, but I don't know that it means more than that the followers of a system do in general a good deal to corrupt it, or that when a great principle is worked into human affairs, a considerable accretion of human folly and falseness mostly grows round it: which things some of us had a suspicion of before.

*Dunsford.* To go back to the subject. What would you do for country amusements, Milverton? That is what concerns me, you know.

*Milverton.* Athletic amusements go on naturally here: do not require so much fostering as in towns. The commons must be carefully kept: I have quite a Cobbettian fear of their being taken away from us under some plausible pretext or other. Well, then, it strikes me that a great deal might be done to promote the more refined pleasures of life among our rural population. I hope we shall live to see many of Hullah's pupils playing an important part in this way. Of course, the foundation for these things may best be laid at schools; and is being laid in some places, I am happy to say.

*Ellesmere.* Humph, music, sing-song!

*Milverton.* Don't you observe, Dunsford, that when Ellesmere wants to attack us, and does not exactly see

how, he mutters to himself sarcastically, sneering himself up, as it were, to the attack.

*Ellesmere.* You and Dunsford are both wild for music, from barrel-organs upwards.

*Milverton.* I confess to liking the humblest attempts at melody.

*Dunsford.* I feel as Sir Thomas Browne tells us he felt, that "even that vulgar and tavern music, which makes one man merry, another mad, strikes in me a deep fit of devotion and a profound contemplation of the first composer. There is something in it of divinity more than the ear discovers; it is an hieroglyphical and shadowed lesson of the whole world and creatures of God: such a melody to the ear as the whole world well understood would afford the understanding."

*Milverton.* Apropos of music in country places, when I was going about last year in the neighbouring county, I saw such a pretty scene at one of the towns. They had got up a band, which played once a week in the evening. It was a beautiful summer evening, and the window of my room at the end overlooked the open space they had chosen for their performances. There was the great man of the neighbourhood in his carriage looking as if he came partly on duty, as well as for pleasure. Then there were burly tradesmen, with an air of quiet satisfaction, sauntering about, or leaning against railings. Some were no doubt critical—thought that Will Miller did not play as well as usual this evening. Will's young wife, who had come out to look again at him in his band dress (for the band had a uniform), thought differently. Little boys broke out into imaginary polkas, having some distant reference to the music: not without grace though. The sweep was pre-eminent: as if he would say, "Dirty and sooty as I am



I have a great deal of fun in me. Indeed, what would May-day be but for me?" Studious little boys of the free school, all green grasshopper-looking, walked about as boys knowing something of Latin. Here and there went a couple of them in childish loving way, with their arms about each other's necks. Matrons and shy young maidens sat upon the door-steps near. Many a merry laugh filled up the interludes of music. And when evening came softly down upon us, the band finished with "God save the Queen," the little circle of those who would hear the last note moved off, there was a clattering of shutters, a shining of lights through casement windows, and soon the only sound to be heard was the rough voice of some villager, who would have been too timid to adventure anything by daylight, but now sang boldly out as he went homewards.

*Ellesmere.* Very pretty, but it sounds to me somewhat fabulous.

*Milverton.* I assure you——

*Ellesmere.* Yes, you were tired, had a good dinner, read a speech for or against the corn-laws, fell asleep of course, and had this ingenious dream, which, to this day, you believe to have been a reality. I understand it all.

*Milverton.* I wish I could have many more such dreams.

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## CHAPTER V.

OUR last conversation broke off abruptly on the entrance of a visitor: we forgot to name a time for our next meeting; and when I came again, I found Milverton alone in his study. He was reading Count Rumford's essays.

*Dunsford.* So you are reading Count Rumford. What is it that interests you there?

*Milverton.* Everything he writes about. He is to me a delightful writer. He throws so much life into all his writings. Whether they are about making the most of food or fuel, or propounding the benefits of bathing, or inveighing against smoke, it is that he went and saw and did and experimented himself upon himself. His proceedings at Munich to feed the poor are more interesting than many a novel. It is surprising, too, how far he was before the world in all the things he gave his mind to.

Here Ellesmere entered.

*Ellesmere.* I heard you were come, Dunsford; I hope we shall have an essay to-day. My critical faculties have been dormant for some days, and want to be roused a little. Milverton was talking to you about Count Rumford when I came in, was he not? Ah, the Count is a great favourite with Milverton when he is down here; but there is a book upstairs which is Milverton's real favourite just now, a portentous-looking book; some relation to a blue-book, something about sewerage, or health of towns, or public improvements, over which said book our friend here goes into enthusiasms. I am sure if it could be reduced to the size of that tatterdemalion Horace that he carries about, the poor little Horace would be quite supplanted.

*Milverton.* Now, I must tell you, Dunsford, that Ellesmere himself took up this book he talks about, and it was a long time before he put it down.

*Ellesmere.* Yes, there is something in real life, even though it is in the unheroic part of it, that interests one. I mean to get through the book.

*Dunsford.* What are we to have to-day for our essay?

*Milverton.* Let us adjourn to the garden, and I will read you an essay on Greatness, if I can find it.

We went to our favourite place, and Milverton read us the following essay.

### GREATNESS.

You cannot substitute any epithet for great, when you are talking of great men. Greatness is not general dexterity carried to any extent; nor proficiency in any one subject of human endeavour. There are great astronomers, great scholars, great painters, even great poets, who are very far from great men. Greatness can do without success and with it. William is greater in his retreats than Marlborough in his victories. On the other hand, the uniformity of Cæsar's success does not dull his greatness. Greatness is not in the circumstances, but in the man.

What does this greatness then consist in? Not in a nice balance of qualities, purposes, and powers. That will make a man happy, a successful man, a man always in his right depth. Nor does it consist in absence of errors. We need only glance back at any list that can be made of great men to be convinced of that. Neither does greatness consist in energy, though often accompanied by it. Indeed, it is rather the breadth of the waters than the force of the current that we look to, to fulfil our idea of greatness. There is no doubt that energy acting upon a nature endowed with the qualities that we sum up in the word cleverness, and directed to a few clear purposes, produces a great effect, and may sometimes be mistaken for greatness. If a man is mainly bent upon his own advancement, it cuts

many a difficult knot of policy for him, and gives a force and distinctness to his mode of going on which looks grand. The same happens if he has one pre-eminent-idea of any kind, even though it should be a narrow one. Indeed, success in life is mostly gained by unity of purpose ; whereas greatness often fails by reason of its having manifold purposes, but it does not cease to be greatness on that account.

If greatness can be shut up in qualities, it will be found to consist in courage and in openness of mind and soul. These qualities may not seem at first to be so potent. But see what growth there is in them. The education of a man of open mind is never ended. Then, with openness of soul, a man sees some way into all other souls that come near him, feels with them, has their experience, is in himself a people. Sympathy is the universal solvent. Nothing is understood without it. The capacity of a man, at least for understanding, may almost be said to vary according to his powers of sympathy. Again, what is there that can counteract selfishness like sympathy? Selfishness may be hedged in by minute watchfulness and self-denial, but it is counteracted by the nature being encouraged to grow out and fix its tendrils upon foreign objects.

The immense defect that want of sympathy is, may be strikingly seen in the failure of the many attempts that have been made in all ages to construct the Christian character, omitting sympathy. It has produced numbers of people walking up and down one narrow plank of self-restraint, pondering over their own merits and demerits, keeping out, not the world exactly, but their fellow-creatures from their hearts, and caring only to drive their neighbours before them on this plank of theirs, or to push them headlong. Thus, with many virtues, and much hard work at the

formation of character, we have had splendid bigots or censorious small people.

But sympathy is warmth and light too. It is, as it were, the moral atmosphere connecting all animated natures. Putting aside, for a moment, the large differences that opinions, language, and education make between men, look at the innate diversity of character. Natural philosophers were amazed when they thought they had found a new-created species. But what is each man but a creature such as the world has not before seen? Then think how they pour forth in multitudinous masses, from princes delicately nurtured to little boys on scrubby commons, or in dark cellars. How are these people to be understood, to be taught to understand each other, but by those who have the deepest sympathies with all? There cannot be a great man without large sympathy. There may be men who play loud-sounding parts in life without it, as on the stage, where kings and great people sometimes enter who are only characters of secondary import—deputy great men. But the interest and the instruction lie with those who have to feel and suffer most.

Add courage to this openness we have been considering, and you have a man who can own himself in the wrong, can forgive, can trust, can adventure, can, in short, use all the means that insight and sympathy endow him with.

I see no other essential characteristics in the greatness of nations than there are in the greatness of individuals. Extraneous circumstances largely influence nations as individuals; and make a larger part of the show of the former than of the latter; as we are wont to consider no

nation great that is not great in extent or resources, as well as in character. But of two nations, equal in other respects, the superiority must belong to the one which excels in courage and openness of mind and soul.

Again, in estimating the relative merits of different periods of the world, we must employ the same tests of greatness that we use to individuals. To compare, for instance, the present and the past. What astounds us most in the past is the wonderful intolerance and cruelty: a cruelty constantly turning upon the inventors; an intolerance provoking ruin to the thing it would foster. The most admirable precepts are thrown from time to time upon this cauldron of human affairs, and oftentimes they only seem to make it blaze the higher. We find men devoting the best part of their intellects to the invariable annoyance and persecution of their fellows. You might think that the earth brought forth with more abundant fruitfulness in the past than now, seeing that men found so much time for cruelty, but that you read of famines and privations which these latter days cannot equal. The recorded violent deaths amount to millions. And this is but a small part of the matter. Consider the modes of justice; the use of torture, for instance. What must have been the blinded state of the wise persons (wise for their day) who used torture? Did they ever think themselves, "What should we not say if we were subjected to this?" Many times they must really have desired to get at the truth; and such was their mode of doing it. Now, at the risk of being thought "a laudator" of time present, I would say, here is the element of greatness we have made progress in. We are more open in mind and soul. We have arrived (some of us at least) at the conclusion that men may honestly differ without offence. We have learned to pity each other

more. There is a greatness in modern toleration which our ancestors knew not.

Then comes the other element of greatness, courage. Have we made progress in that? This is a much more dubious question. The subjects of terror vary so much in different times that it is difficult to estimate the different degrees of courage shown in resisting them. Men fear public opinion now as they did in former times the Star Chamber; and those awful goddesses, Appearances, are to us what the Fates were to the Greeks. It is hardly possible to measure the courage of a modern against that of an ancient; but I am unwilling to believe but that enlightenment must strengthen courage.

The application of the tests of greatness, as in the above instance, is a matter of detail and of nice appreciation, as to the results of which men must be expected to differ largely: the tests themselves remain invariable—openness of nature to admit the light of love and reason, and courage to pursue it.

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*Ellesmere.* I agree to your theory, as far as openness of nature is concerned; but I do not much like to put that half-brute thing, courage, so high.

*Milverton.* Well, you cannot have greatness without it: you may have well-intentioned people and far-seeing people; but if they have no stoutness of heart, they will only be shiftily or remonstrant, nothing like great.

*Ellesmere.* You mean will, not courage. Without will, your open-minded, open-hearted man may be like a great, rudderless vessel driven about by all winds; not a small craft, but a most uncertain one.

*Milverton.* No, I mean both; both will and courage. Courage is the body to will.

*Ellesmere.* I believe you are right in that; but do not omit will. It amused me to see how you brought in one of your old notions—that this age is not contemptible. You scribbling people are generally on the other side.

*Milverton.* You malign us. If I must give any account for my personal predilection for modern times, it consists perhaps in this, that we may now speak our mind. What Tennyson says of his own land,

“The land where, girt with friend or foe,  
A man may say the thing he will,”—

may be said, in some measure, of the age in which we live. This is an inexpressible comfort. This doubles life. These things surely may be said in favour of the present age, not with a view to puff it up, but so far to encourage ourselves, as we may by seeing that the world does not go on for nothing, that all the misery, blood, and toil that have been spent, were not poured out in vain. Could we have our ancestors again before us, would they not rejoice at seeing what they had purchased for us: would they think it any compliment to them to extol their times at the expense of the present, and so to intimate that their efforts had led to nothing?

*Ellesmere.* “I doubt,” as Lord Eldon would have said; no, upon second thoughts, I do not doubt. I feel assured that a good many of these said ancestors you are calling up would be much discomfited at finding that all their suffering had led to no sure basis of persecution of the other side.

*Dunsford.* I wonder, Ellesmere, what you would have done in persecuting times. What escape would your sarcasm have found for itself?



*Milverton.* Some orthodox way, I dare say. I do not think he would have been particularly fond of martyrdom.

*Ellesmere.* No. I have no taste for making torches for truth, or being one; I prefer human darkness to such illumination. At the same time one cannot tell lies; and if one had been questioned about the incomprehensibilities which men in former days were so fierce upon, one must have shown that one disagreed with all parties.

*Dunsford.* Do not say "one"; I should not have disagreed with the great Protestant leaders in the Reformation, for instance.

*Ellesmere.* Humph.

*Milverton.* If we get aground upon the Reformation, we shall never push off again—else would I say something far from complimentary to those Protestant proceedings which we may rather hope were Tudoresque than Protestant.

*Ellesmere.* No, that is not fair. The Tudors were a coarse, fierce race; but it will not do to lay the faults of their times upon them only. Look at Elizabeth's ministers. They had about as much notion of religious tolerance as they had of Professor Wheatstone's telegraph. It was not a growth of that age.

*Milverton.* I do not know. You have Cardinal Pole and the Earl of Essex, both tolerant men in the midst of bigots.

*Ellesmere.* Well, as you said, Milverton, we shall never push off, if we once get aground on this subject.

*Dunsford.* I am in fault; so I will take upon myself to bring you quite away from the Reformation. I have been thinking of that comparison in the essay of the present with the past. Such comparisons seem to me very useful, as they best enable us to understand our own times. And, then, when we have ascertained the state and tendency of our own age, we ought to strive to enrich it with those

qualities which are complementary to its own. Now with all this toleration, which delights you so much, dear Milverton, is it not an age rather deficient in caring about great matters?

*Milverton.* If you mean great speculative matters, I might agree with you; but if you mean what I should call the greatest matters, such as charity, humanity, and the like, I should venture to differ with you, Dunsford.

*Dunsford.* I do not like to see the world indifferent to great speculative matters. I then fear shallowness and earthiness.

*Milverton.* It is very difficult to say what the world is thinking of now. It is certainly wrong to suppose that this is a shallow age because it is not driven by one impulse. As civilisation advances, it becomes more difficult to estimate what is going on, and we set it all down as confusion. Now there is not one "great antique heart," whose beatings we can count, but many impulses, many circles of thought in which men are moving many objects. Men are not all in the same state of progress, so cannot be moved in masses as of old. At one time chivalry urged all men, then the Church, and the phenomena were few, simple, and broad, or at least they seem so in history.

*Ellesmere.* Very true; still I agree somewhat with Dunsford, that men are not agitated as they used to be by the great speculative questions. I account for it in this way, that the material world has opened out before us, and we cannot but look at that, and must play with it and work at it. I would say, too, that philosophy had been found out, and there is something in that. Still, I think if it were not for the interest now attaching to material things, great intellectual questions, not exactly of the old kind, would arise and agitate the world.

*Milverton.* There is one thing in my mind that may confirm your view. I cannot but think that the enlarged view we have of the universe must in some measure damp personal ambition. What is it to be a King, Sheik, Tetrarch, or Emperor, over a bit of a little bit? Macbeth's speech, "we'd jump the life to come," is a thing a man with modern lights, however madly ambitious, would hardly utter.

*Dunsford.* Religious lights, Milverton.

*Milverton.* Of course not, if he had them; but I meant scientific lights. Sway over our fellow-creatures, at any rate anything but mental sway, has shrunk into less proportions.

*Ellesmere.* I have been looking over the essay. I think you may put in somewhere—that that age would probably be the greatest in which there was the least difference between great men and the people in general—when the former were only neglected, not hunted down.

*Milverton.* Yes.

*Ellesmere.* You are rather lengthy here about the cruelties to be found in history; but we are apt to forget these matters.

*Milverton.* They always press upon my mind.

*Dunsford.* And on mine. I do not like to read much of history for that very reason. I get so sick at heart about it all.

*Milverton.* Ah, yes, history is a stupendous thing. To read it is like looking at the stars; we turn away in awe and perplexity. Yet there is some method running through the little affairs of man as through the multitude of suns, seemingly to us as confused as routed armies in full flight.

*Dunsford.* Some law of love.

*Ellesmere.* I am afraid it is not in the past alone that we

should be awe-struck with horrors; we, who have a slave-trade still on earth. But, to go back to the essay, I like what you say about the theory of constructing the Christian character without geniality; only you do not go far enough. You are afraid. People are for ever talking, especially you philanthropical people, about making others happy. I do not know any way so sure of making others happy as of being so oneself, to begin with. I do not mean that people are to be self-absorbed; but they are to drink in nature and life a little. From a genial, wisely-developed man good things radiate; whereas you must allow, Milverton, that benevolent people are very apt to be one-sided and fussy, and not of the sweetest temper if others will not be good and happy in their way.

*Milverton.* That is really not fair. Of course, acid, small-minded people carry their narrow notions and their acidity into their benevolence. Benevolence is no abstract perfection. Men will express their benevolence according to their other gifts or want of gifts. If it is strong, it overcomes other things in the character which would be hindrances to it; but it must speak in the language of the soul it is in.

*Ellesmere.* Come, let us go and see the pigs. I hear them grunting over their dinners in the farmyard. I like to see creatures who can be happy without a theory.

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## CHAPTER VI.

THE next time that I came over to Worth-Ashton it was raining, and I found my friends in the study.

“Well, Dunsford,” said Ellesmere, “is it not comfortable

to have our sessions here for once, and to be looking out on a good solid English wet day? ”

*Dunsford.* Rather a fluid than a solid. But I agree with you in thinking it is very comfortable here.

*Ellesmere.* I like to look upon the backs of books. First I think how much of the owner's inner life and character is shown in his books ; then perhaps I wonder how he got such a book which seems so remote from all that I know of him——

*Milverton.* I shall turn my books the wrong side upwards when you come into the study.

*Ellesmere.* But what amuses me most is to see the odd way in which books get together, especially in the library of a man who reads his books and puts them up again whenever there is room. Now here is a charming party : “A Treatise on the Steam-Engine” between “Locke on Christianity” and Madame de Staël's “Corinne.” I wonder what they talk about at night when we are all asleep. Here is another happy juxtaposition : old Clarendon next to a modern metaphysician whom he would positively loathe. Here is Sadler next to Malthus, and Horsley next to Priestley ; but this sort of thing happens most in the best regulated libraries. It is a charming reflection for controversial writers, that their works will be put together on the same shelves, often between the same covers ; and that in the minds of educated men the name of one writer will be sure to recall the name of the other. So they go down to posterity as a brotherhood.

*Milverton.* To complete Ellesmere's theory, we may say that all those injuries to books which we choose to throw upon some wretched worm, are but the wounds from rival books.

*Ellesmere.* Certainly. But now let us proceed to polish up the weapons of another of these spiteful creatures.

*Dunsford.* Yes. What is to be our essay to-day, Milverton?

*Milverton.* Fiction.

*Ellesmere.* Now, that is really unfortunate. Fiction is just the subject to be discussed—no, not discussed, talked over—out of doors on a hot day, all of us lying about in easy attitudes on the grass, Dunsford with his gaiters forming a most picturesque and prominent figure. But there is nothing complete in this life. “*Surgit amari aliquid*,” and so we must listen to Fiction in arm-chairs.

### FICTION.

The influence of works of fiction is unbounded. Even the minds of well-informed people are often more stored with characters from acknowledged fiction than from history or biography, or the real life around them. We dispute about these characters as if they were realities. Their experience is our experience; we adopt their feelings, and imitate their acts. And so there comes to be something traditional even in the management of the passions. Shakespeare’s historical plays were the only history to the Duke of Marlborough. Thousands of Greeks acted under the influence of what Achilles or Ulysses did, in Homer. The poet sings of the deeds that shall be. He imagines the past; he forms the future.

Yet how surpassingly interesting is real life when we get an insight into it. Occasionally a great genius lifts up the veil of history, and we see men who once really were alive, who did not always live only in history; or, amidst the dreary page of battles, levies, sieges, and the sleep-inducing weavings and unweavings of political combination, we come, ourselves, across some spoken or written words of the great

actors of the time, and are then fascinated by the life and reality of these things. Could you have the life of any man really portrayed to you, sun-drawn as it were, its hopes, its fears, its revolutions of opinion in each day, its most anxious wishes attained, and then, perhaps, crystallising into its blackest regrets—such a work would go far to contain all histories, and be the greatest lesson of love, humility, and tolerance that men had ever read.

Now fiction does not attempt something like the above. In history we are cramped by impertinent facts that must, however, be set down; by theories that must be answered; evidence that must be weighed; views that must be taken. Our facts constantly break off just where we should wish to examine them most closely. The writer of fiction follows his characters into the recesses of their hearts. There are no closed doors for him. His puppets have no secrets from their master. He plagues you with no doubts, no half-views, no criticism. Thus they thought, he tells you; thus they looked, thus they acted. Then, with every opportunity for scenic arrangement (for though his characters are confidential with him, he is only as confidential with his reader as the interest of the story will allow), it is not to be wondered at that the majority of readers should look upon history as a task, but tales of fiction as a delight.

The greatest merit of fiction is the one so ably put forward by Sir James Mackintosh, namely, that it creates and nourishes sympathy. It extends this sympathy, too, in directions where, otherwise, we hardly see when it would have come. But it may be objected that this sympathy is indiscriminate, and that we are in danger of mixing up virtue and vice, and blurring both, if we are led to sympathise with all manner of wrong-doers. But, in the first place, virtue and vice are so mixed in real life, that it is well to be some-

what prepared for that fact; and, moreover, the sympathy is not wrongly directed. Who has not felt intense sympathy for Macbeth? Yet could he be alive again, with evil thoughts against "the gracious Duncan," and could he see into all that has been felt for him, would that be an encouragement to murder? The intense pity of wise people for the crimes of others, when rightly represented, is one of the strongest antidotes against crime. We have taken the extreme case of sympathy being directed towards bad men. How often has fiction made us sympathise with obscure suffering and retiring greatness, with the world-despised, and especially with those mixed characters in whom we might otherwise see but one colour—with Shylock and with Hamlet, with Jeanie Deans and with Claverhouse, with Sancho Panza as well as with Don Quixote.

On the other hand, there is a danger of too much converse with fiction leading us into dreamland, or rather into lubber-land. Of course this "too much converse" implies large converse with inferior writers. Such writers are too apt to make life as they would have it for themselves. Sometimes, also, they must make it to suit booksellers' rules. Having such power over their puppets they abuse it. They can kill these puppets, change their natures suddenly, reward or punish them so easily, that it is no wonder they are led to play fantastic tricks with them. Now, if a sedulous reader of the works of such writers should form his notions of real life from them, he would occasionally meet with rude shocks when he encountered the realities of that life.

For my own part, notwithstanding all the charms of life in swiftly-written novels, I prefer real life. It is true that,



in the former, everything breaks off round, every little event tends to some great thing, everybody one meets is to exercise some great influence for good or ill upon one's fate. I take it for granted one fancies oneself the hero. Then all one's fancy is paid in ready money, or at least one can draw upon it at the end of the third volume. One leaps to remote wealth and honour by hairbreadth chances; and one's uncle in India always dies opportunely. To be sure the thought occurs, that if this novel life could be turned into real life, one might be the uncle in India and not the hero of the tale. But that is a trifling matter, for at any rate one should carry on with spirit somebody else's story. On the whole, however, as I said before, I prefer real life, where nothing is tied up neatly, but all in odds and ends; where the doctrine of compensation enters largely, where we are often most blamed when we least deserve it, where there is no third volume to make things straight, and where many an Augustus marries many a Belinda, and, instead of being happy ever afterwards, finds that there is a growth of trials and troubles for each successive period of man's life.

In considering the subject of fiction, the responsibility of the writers thereof is a matter worth pointing out. We see clearly enough that historians are to be limited by facts and probabilities; but we are apt to make a large allowance for the fancies of writers of fiction. We must remember, however, that fiction is not falsehood. If a writer puts abstract virtues into book-clothing, and sends them upon stilts into the world, he is a bad writer; if he classifies men, and attributes all virtue to one class and all vice to another, he is a false writer. Then, again, if his ideal is so poor, that he fancies man's welfare to consist in immediate happiness; if he means to paint a great man and paints

only a greedy one, he is a mischievous writer ; and not the less so, although by lamplight and amongst a juvenile audience, his coarse scene-painting should be thought very grand. He may be true to his own fancy, but he is false to Nature. A writer, of course, cannot get beyond his own ideal ; but at least he should see that he works up to it ; and if it is a poor one, he had better write histories of the utmost concentration of dulness, than amuse us with unjust and untrue imaginings.

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*Ellesmere.* I am glad you have kept to the obvious things about fiction. It would have been a great nuisance to have had to follow you through intricate theories about what fiction consists in, and what are its limits, and so on. Then we should have got into questions touching the laws of representation generally, and then into art, of which, between ourselves, you know very little.

*Dunsford.* Talking of representation, what do you two, who have now seen something of the world, think about representative government ?

*Ellesmere.* Dunsford plumps down upon us sometimes with awful questions : what do you think of all philosophy ? or what is your opinion of life in general ? Could you not throw in a few small questions of that kind, together with your representative one, and we might try to answer them all at once. Dunsford is only laughing at us, Milverton.

*Milverton.* No, I know what was in Dunsford's mind when he asked that question. He has had his doubts and misgivings, when he has been reading a six nights' debate (for the people in the country I dare say do read those things), whether representative government is the most complete device the human mind could suggest for getting at wise rulers.

*Ellesmere.* It is a doubt which has crossed my mind.

*Milverton.* And mine ; but the doubt, if it has ever been more than mere petulance, has not had much practical weight with me. Look how the business of the world is managed. There are a few people who think out things, and a few who execute. The former are not to be secured by any device. They are gifts. The latter may be well chosen, have often been well chosen, under other forms of government than the representative one. I believe that the favourites of kings have been a superior race of men. Even a fool does not choose a fool for a favourite. He knows better than that ; he must have something to lean against. But between the thinkers and the doers (if, indeed, we ought to make such a distinction), *what a number of useful links there are in a representative government* on account of the much larger number of people admitted into some share of government. What general cultivation must come from that, and what security ! Of course, everything has its wrong side ; and from this number of people let in there comes declamation and clap-trap and mob-service, which is much the same thing as courtiership was in other times. But then, to make the comparison a fair one, you must take the wrong side of any other form of government that has been devised.

*Dunsford.* Well, but so much power centring in the lower house of Parliament, and the getting into Parliament being a thing which is not very inviting to the kind of people one would most like to see there, do you not think that the ablest men are kept away ?

*Milverton.* Yes ; but if you make your governing body a unit or a ten, or any small number, how is this power, unless it is Argus-eyed, and myriad-minded, and right-minded too, to choose the right men any better than they

are found now? The great danger, as it appears to me, of representative government is lest it should slide down from representative government to delegate government. In my opinion, the welfare of England, in great measure, depends upon what takes place at the hustings. If, in the majority of instances, there were abject conduct there, electors and elected would be alike debased; upright public men could not be expected to arise from such beginnings; and thoughtful persons would begin to consider whether some other form of government could not forthwith be made out.

*Ellesmere.* I have a supreme disgust for the man who at the hustings has no opinion beyond or above the clamour round him. How such a fellow would have kissed the ground before a Pompadour, or waited for hours in a Buckingham's ante-chamber, only to catch the faintest beam of reflected light from royalty.

But I declare we have been just like schoolboys talking about forms of government and so on.

“For forms of government let fools contest,  
That which is *worst* administered is best,”—

that is, representative government.

*Milverton.* I should not like either of you to fancy, from what I have been saying about representative government, that I do not see the dangers and the evils of it. In fact, it is a frequent thought with me of what importance the House of Lords is at present, and of how much greater importance it might be made. If there were Peers for life, and official members of the House of Commons, it would, I think, meet most of your objections, Dunsford.

*Dunsford.* I suppose I am becoming a little rusty and disposed to grumble, as I grow old; but there is a good

deal in modern government which seems to me very rude and absurd. There comes a clamour, partly reasonable; power is deaf to it, overlooks it, says there is no such thing; then great clamour; after a time, power welcomes that, takes it to its arms, says that now it is loud it is very wise, wishes it had always been clamour itself.

*Ellesmere.* How many acres do you farm, Dunsford? How spiteful you are!

*Dunsford.* I am not thinking of Corn Laws alone, as you fancy, Master Ellesmere. But to go to other things. I quite agree, Milverton, with what you were saying just now about the business of the world being carried on by few, and the thinking few being in the nature of gifts to the world, not elicited by King or Kaiser.

*Milverton.* The mill-streams that turn the clappers of the world arise in solitary places.

*Ellesmere.* Not a bad metaphor, but untrue. Aristotle, Bacon——

*Milverton.* Well, I believe it would be much wiser to say, that we cannot lay down rules about the highest work; either when it is done, where it will be done, or how it can be made to be done. It is too immaterial for our measurement; for the highest part even of the mere business of the world is in dealing with ideas. It is very amusing to observe the misconceptions of men on these points. They call for what is outward—can understand that, can praise it. Fussiness and the forms of activity in all ages get great praise. Imagine an active, bustling little prætor under Augustus, how he probably pointed out Horace to his sons as a moony kind of man, whose ways were much to be avoided, and told them it was a weakness in Augustus to like such idle men about him instead of men of business.

*Ellesmere.* Or fancy a bustling Glasgow merchant of

Adam Smith's day watching him. How little would the merchant have dreamt what a number of vessels were to be floated away by the ink in the Professor's inkstand ; and what crashing of axes, and clearing of forests in distant lands, the noise of his pen upon the paper portended !

*Milverton.* It is not only the effect of the still-working man that the busy man cannot anticipate, but neither can he comprehend the present labour. If Horace had told my prætor that

“ Abstinuit Venere et vino, sudavit et alsit,”

“ What, to write a few lines !” would his prætorship have cried out. “ Why, I can live well and enjoy life ; and I flatter myself no one in Rome does more business.”

*Dunsford.* All of it only goes to show how little we know of each other, and how tolerant we ought to be of others' efforts.

*Milverton.* The trials that there must be every day without any incident that even the most minute household chronicler could set down ; the labours without show or noise !

*Ellesmere.* The deep things that there are which, with unthinking people, pass for shallow things, merely because they are clear as well as deep. My fable of the other day, for instance—which instead of producing any moral effect upon you two, only seemed to make you both inclined to giggle.

*Milverton.* I am so glad you reminded me of that. I, too, fired with a noble emulation, have invented a fable since we last met which I want you to hear. I assure you I did not mean to laugh at yours : it was only that it came rather unexpectedly upon me. You are not exactly the person from whom one should expect fables.

*Dunsford.* Now for the fable.

*Milverton.* There was a gathering together of creatures hurtful and terrible to man, to name their king. Blight, mildew, darkness, mighty waves, fierce winds, Will-o'-the-wisps, and shadows of grim objects, told fearfully their doings and preferred their claims, none prevailing. But when evening came on, a thin mist curled up, derisively, amidst the assemblage, and said, "I gather round a man going to his own home over paths made by his daily footsteps; and he becomes at once helpless and tame as a child. The lights meant to assist him, then betray. You find him wandering, or need the aid of other Terrors to subdue him. I am, alone, confusion to him." And all the assemblage bowed before the mist, and made it king, and set it on the brow of many a mountain, where, when it is not doing evil, it may be often seen to this day.

*Dunsford.* Well, I like that fable: only I am not quite clear about the meaning.

*Ellesmere.* You had no doubt about mine.

*Dunsford.* Is the mist calumny, Milverton?

*Ellesmere.* No, prejudice, I am sure.

*Dunsford.* Familiarity with the things around us, obscuring knowledge?

*Milverton.* I would rather not explain. Each of you make your own fable of it.

*Dunsford.* Well, if ever I make a fable, it shall be one of the old-fashioned sort, with animals for the speakers, and a good easy moral.

*Ellesmere.* Not a thing requiring the notes of seven German metaphysicians. I must go and talk a little to my friends the trees, and see if I can get any explanation from them. It is turning out a beautiful day after all, notwithstanding my praise of its solidity.

## CHAPTER VII.

WE met as usual at our old spot on the lawn for our next reading. I forget what took place before reading, except that Ellesmere was very jocose about our reading "Fiction" in-doors, and the following "November Essay," as he called it, "under a jovial sun, and with the power of getting up and walking away from each other to any extent."

### ON THE ART OF LIVING WITH OTHERS.

The *Iliad* for war ; the *Odyssey* for wandering ; but where is the great domestic epic ? Yet it is but commonplace to say, that passions may rage round a tea-table, which would not have misbecome men dashing at one another in war-chariots ; and evolutions of patience and temper are performed at the fireside, worthy to be compared with the Retreat of the Ten Thousand. Men have worshipped some fantastic being for living alone in a wilderness ; but social martyrdoms place no saints upon the calendar.

We may blind ourselves to it if we like, but the hatreds and disgusts that there are behind friendship, relationship, service, and, indeed, proximity of all kinds, is one of the darkest spots upon earth. The various relations of life, which bring people together, cannot, as we know, be perfectly fulfilled except in a state where they will, perhaps, be no occasion for any of them. It is no harm, however, to endeavour to see whether there are any methods which may make these relations in the least degree more harmonious now.

In the first place, if people are to live happily together, they must not fancy, because they are thrown together now,



that all their lives have been exactly similar up to the present time, that they started exactly alike, and that they are to be for the future of the same mind. A thorough conviction of the difference of men is the great thing to be assured of in social knowledge : it is to life what Newton's law is to astronomy. Sometimes men have a knowledge of it with regard to the world in general : they do not expect the outer world to agree with them in all points, but are vexed at not being able to drive their own tastes and opinions into those they live with. Diversities distress them. They will not see that there are many forms of virtue and wisdom. Yet we might as well say, "Why all these stars ; why this difference ; why not all one star ?"

Many of the rules for people living together in peace follow from the above. For instance, not to interfere unreasonably with others, not to ridicule their tastes, not to question and re-question their resolves, not to indulge in perpetual comment on their proceedings, and to delight in their having other pursuits than ours, are all based upon a thorough perception of the simple fact that they are not we.

Another rule for living happily with others is to avoid having stock subjects of disputation. It mostly happens, when people live much together, that they come to have certain set topics, around which, from frequent dispute, there is such a growth of angry words, mortified vanity, and the like, that the original subject of difference becomes a standing subject for quarrel ; and there is a tendency in all minor disputes to drift down to it.

Again, if people wish to live well together, they must not hold too much to logic, and suppose that everything is to be settled by sufficient reason. Dr. Johnson saw this clearly with regard to married people, when he said, "Wretched

would be the pair above all names of wretchedness, who should be doomed to adjust by reason every morning all the minute detail of a domestic day." But the application should be much more general than he made it. There is no time for such reasonings, and nothing that is worth them. And when we recollect how two lawyers, or two politicians, can go on contending, and that there is no end of one-sided reasoning on any subject, we shall not be sure that such contention is the best mode for arriving at truth. But certainly it is not the way to arrive at good temper.

If you would be loved as a companion, avoid unnecessary criticism upon those with whom you live. The number of people who have taken out judges' patents for themselves is very large in any society. Now it would be hard for a man to live with another who was always criticising his actions, even if it were kindly and just criticism. It would be like living between the glasses of a microscope. But these self-elected judges, like their prototypes, are very apt to have the persons they judge brought before them in the guise of culprits.

One of the most provoking forms of the criticism above alluded to is that which may be called criticism over the shoulder. "Had I been consulted," "Had you listened to me," "But you always will," and such short scraps of sentences may remind many of us of dissertations which we have suffered and inflicted, and of which we cannot call to mind any soothing effect.

Another rule is, not to let familiarity swallow up all courtesy. Many of us have a habit of saying to those with whom we live such things as we say about strangers behind their backs. There is no place, however, where real politeness is of more value than where we mostly think it would be superfluous. You may say more truth,

or rather speak out more plainly, to your associates, but not less courteously than you do to strangers.

Again, we must not expect more from the society of our friends and companions than it can give, and especially must not expect contrary things. It is something arrogant to talk of travelling over other minds (mind being, for what we know, infinite); but still we become familiar with the upper views, tastes, and tempers of our associates. And it is hardly in man to estimate justly what is familiar to him. In travelling along at night, as Hazlitt says, we catch a glimpse into cheerful-looking rooms with light blazing in them, and we conclude involuntarily how happy the inmates must be. Yet there is heaven and hell in those rooms—the same heaven and hell that we have known in others.

There are two great classes of promoters of social happiness—cheerful people, and people who have some reticence. The latter are more secure benefits to society even than the former. They are non-conductors of all the heats and animosities around them. To have peace in a house, or a family, or any social circle, the members of it must beware of passing on hasty and uncharitable speeches, which, the whole of the context seldom being told, is often not conveying but creating mischief. They must be very good people to avoid doing this; for let Human Nature say what it will, it likes sometimes to look on at a quarrel, and that not altogether from ill-nature, but from a love of excitement, for the same reason that Charles II. liked to attend the debates in the Lords, because they were “as good as a play.”

We come now to the consideration of temper, which

might have been expected to be treated first. But to cut off the means and causes of bad temper is, perhaps, of as much importance as any direct dealing with the temper itself. Besides, it is probable that in small social circles there is more suffering from unkindness than ill-temper. Anger is a thing that those who live under us suffer more from than those who live with us. But all the forms of ill-humour and sour-sensitiveness, which especially belong to equal intimacy (though, indeed, they are common to all), are best to be met by impassiveness. When two sensitive persons are shut up together, they go on vexing each other with a reproductive irritability.<sup>1</sup> But sensitive and hard people get on well together. The supply of temper is not altogether out of the usual laws of supply and demand.

Intimate friends and relations should be careful when they go out into the world together, or admit others to their own circle, that they do not make a bad use of the knowledge which they have gained of each other by their intimacy. Nothing is more common than this, and did it

<sup>1</sup> Madame Necker de Saussure's maxim about firmness with children has suggested the above. "Ce que plie ne peut servir d'appui, et l'enfant veut être appuyé. Non-seulement il en a besoin, mais il le désire, mais sa tendresse la plus constante n'est qu'à ce prix. Si vous lui faites l'effet d'un autre enfant, si vous partagez ses passions, ses vacillations continuelles, si vous lui rendez tous ses mouvements en les augmentant, soit par la contrariété, soit par un excès de complaisance, il pourra se servir de vous comme d'un jouet, mais non être heureux en votre présence; il pleurera, se mutinera, et bientôt le souvenir d'un temps de désordre et d'humeur se liera avec votre idée. Vous n'avez pas été le soutien de votre enfant, vous ne l'avez pas préservé de cette fluctuation perpétuelle de la volonté, maladie des êtres faibles et livrés à une imagination vive; vous n'avez assuré ni sa paix, ni sa sagesse, ni son bonheur, pourquoi vous croirait-il sa mère."—*L'Education Progressive*, vol. i. p. 228.

not mostly proceed from mere carelessness, it would be superlatively ungenerous. You seldom need wait for the written life of a man to hear about his weaknesses, or what are supposed to be such, if you know his intimate friends, or meet him in company with them.

Lastly, in conciliating those we live with, it is most surely done, not by consulting their interests, nor by giving way to their opinions, so much as by not offending their tastes. The most refined part of us lies in this region of taste, which is perhaps a result of our whole being rather than a part of our nature, and, at any rate, is the region of our most subtle sympathies and antipathies.

It may be said that if the great principles of Christianity were attended to, all such rules, suggestions, and observations as the above would be needless. True enough! Great principles are at the bottom of all things; but to apply them to daily life, many little rules, precautions, and insights are needed. Such things hold a middle place between real life and principles, as form does between matter and spirit, moulding the one and expressing the other.

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*Ellesmere.* Quite right that last part. Everybody must have known really good people, with all Christian temper, but having so little Christian prudence as to do a great deal of mischief in society.

*Dunsford.* There is one case, my dear Milverton, which I do not think you have considered: the case where people live unhappily together, not from any bad relations between them, but because they do not agree about the treatment of others. A just person, for instance, who would

bear anything for himself or herself, must remonstrate, at the hazard of any disagreement, at injustice to others.

*Milverton.* Yes. That, however, is a case to be decided upon higher considerations than those I have been treating of. A man must do his duty in the way of preventing injustice, and take what comes of it.

*Ellesmere.* For people to live happily together, the real secret is that they should not live too much together. Of course, you cannot say that; it would sound harsh, and cut short the essay altogether.

Again, you talk about tastes and "region of subtle sympathies," and all that. I have observed that if people's vanity is pleased, they live well enough together. Offended vanity is the great separator. You hear a man (call him B) saying that he is really not himself before So-and-so; tell him that So-and-so admires him very much and is himself rather abashed before B, and B is straightway comfortable, and they get on harmoniously together, and you hear no more about subtle sympathies or antipathies.

*Dunsford.* What a low view you do take of things sometimes, Ellesmere!

*Milverton.* I should not care how low it was, but it is not fair—at least, it does not contain the whole matter. In the very case he has put, there was a subtle embarrassment between B and So-and-so. Well, now, let these people not merely meet occasionally, but be obliged to live together, without any such explanation as Ellesmere has imagined, and they will be very uncomfortable from causes that you cannot impute to vanity. It takes away much of the savour of life to live amongst those with whom one has not anything like one's fair value. It may not be mortified vanity, but unsatisfied sympathy, which causes this discomfort. B

thinks that the other does not know him; he feels that he has no place with the other. When there is intense admiration on one side, there is hardly a care in the mind of the admiring one as to what estimation he is held in. But in ordinary cases some clearly defined respect and acknowledgment of worth is needed on both sides. See how happy a man is in any office or service who is acknowledged to do something well. How comfortable he is with his superiors! He has his place. It is not exactly a satisfaction of his vanity, but an acknowledgment of his useful existence that contents him. I do not mean to say that there are not innumerable claims for acknowledgment of merit and service made by rampant vanity and egotism, which claims cannot be satisfied, ought not to be satisfied, and which, being unsatisfied, embitter people. But I think your word Vanity will not explain all the feelings we have been talking about.

*Ellesmere.* Perhaps not.

*Dunsford.* Certainly not.

*Ellesmere.* Well, at any rate, you will admit that there is a class of dreadfully humble people who make immense claims at the very time that they are explaining that they have no claims. They say they know they cannot be esteemed; they are well aware that they are not wanted, and so on, all the while making it a sort of grievance and a claim that they are not what they know themselves not to be; whereas, if they did but fall back upon their humility, and keep themselves quiet about their demerits, they would be strong then, and in their place and happy, doing what they could.

*Milwerton.* It must be confessed that these people do make their humility somewhat obnoxious. Yet, after all, you allow that they know their deficiencies, and they only

say, "I know I have not much to recommend me, but I wish to be loved, nevertheless."

*Ellesmere.* Ah, if they only said it a few times! Besides, there is a little envy mixed up with the humility that I mean.

*Dunsford.* Travelling is a great trial of people's ability to live together.

*Ellesmere.* Yes. Lavater says that you do not know a man until you have divided an inheritance with him; but I think a long journey with him will do.

*Milverton.* Well, and what is it in travelling that makes people disagree? Not direct selfishness, but injudicious management; stupid regrets, for instance, at things not being different from what they are, or from what they might have been, if "the other route" had been chosen; fellow-travellers punishing each other with each other's tastes; getting stock subjects of disputation; laughing unseasonably at each other's vexations and discomforts; and endeavouring to settle everything by the force of sufficient reason, instead of by some authorised will, or by tossing up. Thus, in the short time of a journey, almost all modes and causes of human disagreement are brought into action.

*Ellesmere.* My favourite one not being the least—overmuch of each other's company.

For my part, I think one of the greatest bores of companionship is, not merely that people wish to fit tastes and notions on you just as they might the first pair of ready-made shoes they meet with, a process amusing enough to the bystander, but exquisitely uncomfortable to the person being ready-shod: but that they bore you with never-ending talk about their pursuits, even when they know that you do not work in the same groove with them, and that they cannot hope to make you do so.



*Dunsford.* Nobody can accuse you of that fault, Ellesmere: I never heard you dilate much upon anything that interested you, though I have known you have some pet subject, and to be working at it for months. But this comes of your coldness of nature.

*Ellesmere.* Well, it might bear a more favourable construction. But to go back to the essay. It only contemplates the fact of people living together as equals, if we may so say; but in general, of course, you must add some other relationship or connection than that of merely being together.

*Milverton.* I had not overlooked that; but there are certain general rules in the matter that may be applied to nearly all relationship, just as I have taken that one from Johnson, applied by him to married life, about not endeavouring to settle all things by reasoning, and have given it a general application which, I believe, it will bear.

*Ellesmere.* There is one thing that I should think must often make women very unreasonable and unpleasant companions. Oh, you may both hold up your hands and eyes, but I am not married, and can say what I please. Of course, you put on the proper official look of astonishment; and I will duly report it. But I was going to say that Chivalry, which has doubtless done a great deal of good, has also done a great deal of harm. Women may talk the greatest unreason out of doors, and nobody kindly informs them that it is unreason. They do not talk much before clever men, and when they do, their words are humoured and dandled as children's sayings are. Now, I should fancy—mind, I do not want either of you to say that my fancy is otherwise than quite unreasonable—I should fancy that when women have to hear reason at home it must sound

odd to them. The truth is, you know, we cannot pet anything much without doing it mischief. You cannot pet the intellect, any more than the will, without injuring it. Well then, again, if you put people upon a pedestal and do a great deal of worship around them, I cannot think but the will in such cases must become rather corrupted, and that lessons of obedience must fall rather harshly——

*Dunsford.* Why, you Mahometan, you Turk of a lawyer——would you do away with all the high things of courtesy, tenderness for the weaker, and——

*Milverton.* No, I see what he means, and there is something in it. Many a woman is brought up in unreason and self-will from these causes that he has given, as many a man from other causes; but there is one great corrective that he has omitted, and which is, that all forms, fashions, and outward things have a tendency to go down before realities when they come hand to hand together. Knowledge and judgment prevail. Governing is apt to fall to the right person in private as in public affairs.

*Ellesmere.* Those who give way in public affairs, and let the men who can do a thing do it, are so far wise that they know what is to be done, mostly. But the very things I am arguing against are the unreason and self-will, which, being constantly pampered, do not appreciate reason or just sway. Besides, is there not a force in ill-humour and unreason to which you constantly see the wisest bend? You will come round to my opinion some day. I do not want, though, to convince you. It is no business of mine.

*Milverton.* Well, I may be wrong, but I think, when we come to consider education, I can show you how the dangers you fear may be greatly obviated, without Chivalry being obliged to put on a wig and gown, and be wise.

*Dunsford.* Meanwhile, let us enjoy the delightful atmosphere of courtesy, unreasonable sometimes, if you like, which saves many people being put down with the best arguments in the most convincing manner, or being weighed, estimated, and given way to, so as not to spoil them.

*Ellesmere.* Do not tell, either of you, what I have been saying. I shall always be poked up into some garret when I come to see you, if you do.

*Dunsford.* I think the most curious thing, as regards people living together, is the intense ignorance they sometimes are in of each other. Many years ago one or other of you said something of this kind to me, and I have often thought of it since.

*Milverton.* People fulfil a relation towards each other, and they only know each other in that relation, especially if it is badly managed by the superior one; but any way the relationship involves some ignorance. They perform orbits round each other, each gyrating, too, upon his own axis, and there are parts of the character of each which are never brought into view of the other.

*Ellesmere.* I should carry this notion of yours, Milverton, farther than you do. There is a peculiar mental relation soon constituted between associates of any kind, which confines and prevents complete knowledge on both sides. Each man, in some measure therefore, knows others only through himself. Tennyson makes Ulysses say—

“I am a part of all that I have seen;”

it might have run—

“I am a part of all that I have heard.”

*Dunsford.* Ellesmere becoming metaphysical and transcendental!

*Ellesmere.* Well, well, we will leave these heights, and descend in little drops of criticism. There are two or three things you might have pointed out, Milverton. Perhaps you would say that they are included in what you have said, but I think not. You talk of the mischief of much comment on each other amongst those who live together. You might have shown, I think, that in the case of near friends and relations this comment also deepens into interference—at least it partakes of that nature. Friends and relations should, therefore, be especially careful to avoid needless comments on each other. They do just the contrary. That is one of the reasons why they often hate one another so much.

*Dunsford.* Ellesmere!

*Ellesmere.* Protest, if you like, my dear Dunsford.

Dissentient,

1. Because I wish it were not so.
2. Because I am sorry that it is.

(Signed) DUNSFORD.

*Milverton.* "Hate" is too strong a word, Ellesmere; what you say would be true enough, if you would put "are not in sympathy with."

*Ellesmere.* "Have a quiet distaste for." That is the proper medium. Now, to go to another matter. You have not put the case of over-managing people, who are tremendous to live with.

*Milverton.* I have spoken about "interfering unreasonably with others."

*Ellesmere.* That does not quite convey what I mean. It

is when the manager and the managee are both of the same mind as to the thing to be done; but the former insists, and instructs, and suggests, and foresees, till the other feels that all free agency for him is gone.

*Milverton.* It is a sad thing to consider how much of their abilities people turn to tiresomeness. You see a man who would be very agreeable if he were not so observant: another who would be charming, if he were deaf and dumb: a third delightful, if he did not vex all around him with superfluous criticism.

*Ellesmere.* A hit at me that last, I suspect. But I shall go on. You have not, I think, made enough merit of independence in companionship. If I were to put into an aphorism what I mean, I should say, Those who depend wholly on companionship are the worst companions; or thus: Those deserve companionship who can do without it. There, Mr. Aphoriser General, what do you say to that?

*Milverton.* Very good, but——

*Ellesmere.* Of course a “but” to other people’s aphorisms, as if every aphorism had not buts innumerable. We critics, you know, cannot abide criticism. We do all the criticism that is needed ourselves. I wonder at the presumption sometimes of you wretched authors. But to proceed. You have not said anything about the mischief of superfluous condolence amongst people who live together. I flatter myself that I could condole anybody out of all peace of mind.

*Milverton.* All depends upon whether condolence goes with the grain, or against the grain, of vanity. I know what you mean, however. For instance, it is a very absurd thing to fret much over other people’s courses, not considering the knowledge and discipline that there is in any course

that a man may take. And it is still more absurd to be constantly showing the people fretted over that you are fretting over them. I think a good deal of what you call superfluous condolence would come under the head of superfluous criticism.

*Ellesmere.* Not altogether. In companionship, when an evil happens to one of the circle, the others should simply attempt to share and lighten it, not to expound it, or dilate on it, or make it the least darker. The person afflicted generally apprehends all the blackness sufficiently. Now, unjust abuse by the world is to me like the howling of the wind at night when one is warm within. Bring any draught of it into one's house though, and it is not so pleasant.

*Dunsford.* Talking of companionship, do not you think there is often a peculiar feeling of home where age or infirmity is? The arm-chair of the sick or the old is the centre of the house. They think, perhaps, that they are unimportant; but all the household hopes and cares flow to them and from them.

*Milverton.* I quite agree with you. What you have just depicted is a beautiful sight, especially when, as you often see, the age or infirmity is not in the least selfish or exacting.

*Ellesmere.* We have said a great deal about the companionship of human beings; but, upon my word, we ought to have kept a few words for our dog friends. Rollo has been lolling out his great tongue, and looking wistfully from face to face, as we each began our talk. A few minutes ago he was quite concerned, thinking I was angry with you, when I would not let you "but" my aphorism. I am not sure which of the three I should rather go out walking with now: Dunsford, Rollo, Milverton. The middle one is the safest companion. I am sure not

to get out of humour with him. But I have no objection to try the whole three: only I vote for much continuity of silence, as we have had floods of discussion to-day.

*Dunsford.* Agreed!

*Ellesmere.* Come, Rollo, you may bark now, as you have been silent, like a wise dog, all the morning.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

BEFORE leaving my friends, I promised to come over again to Worth-Ashton in a day or two, to hear another essay. I came early and found them reading their letters.

"You remember Annesleigh at college," said Milverton, "do you not, Dunsford?"

*Dunsford.* Yes.

*Milverton.* Here is a long letter from him. He is evidently vexed at the newspaper articles about his conduct in a matter of —, and he writes to tell me that he is totally misrepresented.

*Dunsford.* Why does he not explain this publicly?

*Milverton.* Yes, you naturally think so at first, but such a mode of proceeding would never do for a man in office, and rarely, perhaps, for any man. At least, so the most judicious people seem to think. I have known a man in office bear patiently, without attempting any answer, a serious charge which a few lines would have entirely answered, indeed, turned the other way. But then he thought, I imagine, that if you once begin answering, there is no end to it, and also, which is more important, that the public journals were not a tribunal which he was called to appear before. He had his official superiors.

*Dunsford.* It should be widely known and acknowledged, then, that silence does not give consent in these cases.

*Milverton.* It is known, though not, perhaps, sufficiently.

*Dunsford.* What a fearful power this anonymous journalism is !

*Milverton.* There is a great deal certainly that is mischievous in it; but, take it altogether, it is a wonderful product of civilisation—morally too. Even as regards those qualities which would in general, to use a phrase of Bacon's, "be noted as deficiencies" in the press, in courtesy and forbearance, for example, it makes a much better figure than might have been expected; as any one would testify, I suspect, who had observed, or himself experienced, the temptations incident to writing on short notice, without much opportunity of after-thought or correction, upon subjects about which he had already expressed an opinion.

*Dunsford.* Is the anonymousness absolutely necessary?

*Milverton.* I have often thought whether it is. If the anonymousness were taken away, the press would lose much of its power; but then, why should it not lose a portion of its power, if that portion is only built upon some delusion?

*Ellesmere.* It is a question of expediency. As government of all kinds becomes better managed, there is less necessity for protection for the press. It must be recollected, however, that this anonymousness (to coin a word) may not only be useful to protect us from any abuse of power, but that at least it takes away that temptation to discuss things in an insufficient manner which arises from personal fear of giving offence. Then, again, there is an advantage in considering arguments without reference to persons. If well-known authors wrote for the press and gave their signatures,



we should often pass by the arguments unfairly, saying, "Oh, it is only so-and-so : that is the way he always looks at things," without seeing whether it is the right way for the occasion in question.

*Milverton.* But take the other side, Ellesmere. What national dislikes are fostered by newspaper articles, and——

*Ellesmere.* Articles in reviews and by books.

*Milverton.* Yes, but somehow or other people imagine that newspapers speak the opinion of a much greater number of people——

*Ellesmere.* Do not let us talk any more about it. We may become wise enough and well-managed enough to do without this anonymousness : we may not. How it would astound an ardent Whig or Radical of the last generation if we could hear such a sentiment as this—as a toast we will say—"The Press : and may we become so civilised as to be able to take away some of its liberty."

*Milverton.* It may be put another way : "May it become so civilised that we shall not want to take away any of its liberty." But I see you are tired of this subject. Shall we go on the lawn and have our essay ?

We assented, and Milverton read the following :—

## UNREASONABLE CLAIMS IN SOCIAL AFFECTIONS AND RELATIONS.

We are all apt to magnify the importance of whatever we are thinking about, which is not to be wondered at ; for everything human has an outlet into infinity, which we come to perceive on considering it. But with a knowledge of this tendency, I still venture to say that, of all that

concerns mankind, this subject has, perhaps, been the least treated of in regard to its significance. For once that unreasonable expectations of gratitude have been reproved, ingratitude has been denounced a thousand times; and the same may be said of inconstancy, unkindness in friendship, neglected merit and the like.

To begin with ingratitude. Human beings seldom have the demands upon each other which they imagine; and for what they have done they frequently ask an impossible return. Moreover, when people really have done others a service, the persons benefited often do not understand it. Could they have understood it, the benefactor, perhaps, would not have had to perform it. You cannot expect gratitude from them in proportion to your enlightenment. Then, again, where the service is a palpable one, thoroughly understood, we often require that the gratitude for it should bear down all the rest of the man's character. The dog is the very emblem of faithfulness; yet I believe it is found that he will sometimes like the person who takes him out and amuses him more than the person who feeds him. So, amongst bipeds, the most solid service must sometimes give way to the claims of congeniality. Human creatures are, happily, not to be swayed by self-interest alone: they are many-sided creatures; there are numberless modes of attaching their affections. Not only like likes like, but unlike likes unlike.

To give an instance which must often occur. Two persons, both of feeble will, act together; one as superior, the other as inferior. The superior is very kind, the inferior is grateful. Circumstances occur to break this relation. The inferior comes under a superior of strong will, who is not, however, as tolerant and patient as his predecessor. But this second superior soon acquires unbounded influence

over the inferior : if the first one looks on, he may wonder at the alacrity and affection of his former subordinate towards the new man, and talk much about ingratitude. But the inferior has now found somebody to lean upon and to reverence. And he cannot deny his nature and be otherwise than he is. In this case it does not look like ingratitude, except perhaps to the complaining person. But there are doubtless numerous instances in which, if we saw all the facts clearly, we should no more confirm the charge of ingratitude than we do here.

Then, again, we seldom make sufficient allowance for the burden which there is in obligation, at least to all but great and good minds. There are some people who can receive as heartily as they would give ; but the obligation of an ordinary person to an ordinary person is more apt to be brought to mind as a present sore than as a past delight.

Amongst the unreasonable views of the affections, the most absurd one has been the fancy that love entirely depends upon the will ; still more that the love of others for us is to be guided by the inducements which seem probable to us. We have served them ; we think only of them ; we are their lovers, or fathers, or brothers ; we deserve and require to be loved and to have the love proved to us. But love is not like property ; it has neither duties nor rights. You argue for it in vain ; and there is no one who can give it you. It is not his or hers to give. Millions of bribes and infinite arguments cannot prevail. For it is not a substance, but a relation. There is no royal road. We are loved as we are lovable to the person loving. It is no answer to say that in some cases the love is based on no reality, but is solely in the imagination—that is, that we are loved not for what we are, but for what we are fancied to be. That will not bring it any more into the dominions of

logic; and love still remains the same untamable creature, deaf to advocacy, blind to other people's idea of merit, and not a substance to be weighed or numbered at all.

Then, as to the complaints about broken friendship. Friendship is often outgrown; and his former child's clothes will no more fit a man than some of his former friendships. Often a breach of friendship is supposed to occur when there is nothing of the kind. People see one another seldom; their courses in life are different; they meet, and their intercourse is constrained. They fancy that their friendship is mightily cooled. But imagine the dearest friends, one coming home after a long sojourn, the other going out to new lands: the ships that carry these meet; the friends talk together in a confused way not relevant at all to their friendship, and, if not well assured of their mutual regard, might naturally fancy that it was much abated. Something like this occurs daily in the stream of the world. Then, too, unless people are very unreasonable, they cannot expect that their friends will pass into new systems of thought and action without new ties of all kinds being created, and some modification of the old ones taking place.

When we are talking of exorbitant claims made for the regard of others, we must not omit those of what is called neglected merit. A man feels that he has abilities or talents of a particular kind, that he has shown them, and still he is a neglected man. I am far from saying that merit is sufficiently looked out for; but a man may take the sting out of any neglect of his merits by thinking that at least it does not arise from *malice prepense*, as he almost imagines in his anger. Neither the public, nor individuals, have the time, or will, resolutely to neglect anybody. What pleases

us we admire and further; if a man in any profession, calling, or art, does things which are beyond us, we are as guiltless of neglecting him as the Caffres are of neglecting the differential calculus. Milton sells his *Paradise Lost* for ten pounds; there is no record of Shakespeare dining much with Queen Elizabeth. And it is Utopian to imagine that statues will be set up to the right men in their day.

The same arguments which applied to the complaints of ingratitude, apply to the complaints of neglected merit. The merit is oftentimes not understood. Be it ever so manifest, it cannot absorb men's attention. When it is really great, it has not been brought out by the hope of reward, any more than the kindest services by the hope of gratitude. In neither case is it becoming or rational to be clamorous about payment.

There is one thing that people hardly ever remember, or, indeed, have imagination enough to conceive; namely, the effect of each man being shut up in his individuality. Take a long course of sayings and doings in which many persons have been engaged. Each one of them is in his own mind the centre of the web, though, perhaps, he is at the edge of it. We know that in our observations of the things of sense, any difference in the points from which the observation is taken gives a different view of the same thing. Moreover, in the world of sense, the objects and the points of view are each indifferent to the rest; but in life the points of view are centres of action that have had something to do with the making of the things looked at. If we could calculate the moral parallax arising from these causes, we should see, by the mere aid of the intellect, how unjust we often are in our complaints of ingratitude, inconstancy, and neglect. But without these nice calculations, such errors of

view may be corrected at once by humility, a more sure method than the most enlightened appreciation of the cause of error. Humility is the true cure for many a needless heartache.

It must not be supposed that in thus opposing unreasonable views of social affections, anything is done to dis sever such affections. The Duke of Wellington, writing to a man in a dubious position of authority, says, "The less you claim, the more you will have." This is remarkably true of the affections; and there is scarcely anything that would make men happier than teaching them to watch against unreasonableness in their claims of regard and affection; and which at the same time would be more likely to ensure their getting what may be their due.

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*Ellesmere (clapping his hands).* An essay after my heart; worth tons of soft trash. In general you are amplifying duties, telling everybody that they are to be so good to every other body. Now it is as well to let every other body know that he is not to expect all he may fancy from everybody. A man complains that his prosperous friends neglect him; infinitely overrating, in all probability, his claims, and his friends' power of doing anything for him. Well, then, you may think me very hard, but I say that the most absurd claims are often put forth on the ground of relationship. I do not deny that there is something in blood, but it must not be made too much of. Near relations have great opportunities of attaching each other; if they fail to use these, I do not think it is well to let them imagine that mere relationship is to be the talisman of affection.

*Dunsford.* I do not see exactly how to answer all that you or Milverton have said; but I am not prepared, as official people say, to agree with you. I especially disagree

with what Milverton has said about love. He leaves much too little power to the will.

*Milverton.* I dare say I may have done so. These are very deep matters, and any one view about them does not exhaust them. I remember C—— once saying to me that a man never utters anything without error. He may even think of it rightly; but he cannot bring it out rightly. It turns a little false, as it were, when it quits the brain and comes into life.

*Ellesmere.* I thought you would soon go over to the soft side. Here, Rollo; there's a good dog. You do not form unreasonable expectations, do you? A very little petting puts you into an ecstasy, and you are much wiser than many a biped who is full of his claims for gratitude, and friendship, and love, and who is always longing for well-merited rewards to fall into his mouth. Down, dog!

*Milverton.* Poor animal! it little knows that all this sudden notice is only by way of ridiculing us. Why I did not maintain my ground stoutly against Dunsford is, that I am always afraid of pushing moral conclusions too far. Since we have been talking, I think I see more clearly than I did before what I mean to convey by the essay—namely, that men fall into unreasonable views respecting the affections *from imagining that at the general laws of the mind are suspended for the sake of the affections.*

*Dunsford.* That seems safer ground.

*Milverton.* Now to illustrate what I mean by a very similar instance. The mind is avid of new impressions. It "travels over," or thinks it travels over, another mind; and, though it may conceal its wish for "fresh fields and pastures new," it does so wish. However harsh, therefore, and unromantic it may seem, the best plan is to humour Nature, and not to exhaust by over-frequent presence the

affection of those whom we would love, or whom we would have to love us. I would not say, after the manner of Rochefoucauld, that the less we see of people the more we like them; but there are certain limits of sociality; and prudent reserve and absence may find a place in the management of the tenderest relations.

*Dunsford.* Yes, all this is true enough: I do not see anything hard in this. But then there is the other side. Custom is a great aid to affection.

*Milverton.* Yes. All I say is, do not fancy that the general laws are suspended for the sake of any one affection.

*Dunsford.* Still this does not go to the question whether there is not something more of will in affection than you make out. You would speak of inducements and counter-inducements, aids and hindrances; but I cannot but think you are limiting the power of will, and therefore limiting duty. Such views tend to make people easily discontented with each other, and prevent their making efforts to get over offences, and to find out what is lovable in those about them.

*Ellesmere.* Here we are in the deep places again. I see you are pondering, Milverton. It is a question, as a minister would say when Parliament perplexes him, that we must go to the country upon; each man's heart will, perhaps, tell him best about it. For my own part, I think that the continuance of affection, as the rise of it, depends more on the taste being satisfied, or at least not disgusted, than upon any other single thing. Our hearts may be touched at our being loved by people essentially distasteful to us, whose modes of talking and acting are a continual offence to us; but whether we can love them in return is a question.

*Milverton.* Yes, we can, I think. I begin to see that it



is a question of degree. The word love includes many shades of meaning. When it includes admiration, of course we cannot be said to love those in whom we see nothing to admire. But this seldom happens in the mixed characters of real life. The upshot of it all seems to me to be, that, as Guizot says of civilisation, every impulse has room; so in the affections, every inducement and counter-inducement has its influence; and the result is not a simple one, which can be spoken of as if it were alike on all occasions and with all men.

*Dunsford.* I am still unanswered, I think, Milverton. What you say is still wholly built upon inducements, and does not touch the power of will.

*Milverton.* No; it does not.

*Ellesmere.* We must leave that alone. Infinite piles of books have not as yet lifted us up to a clear view of that matter.

*Dunsford.* Well, then, we must leave it as a vexed question; but let it be seen that there is such a question. Now, as to another thing: you speak, Milverton, of men's not making allowance enough for the unpleasant weight of obligation. I think that weight seems to have increased in modern times. Essex could give Bacon a small estate, and Bacon could take it comfortably, I have no doubt. That is a much more wholesome state of things among friends than the present.

*Milverton.* Yes, undoubtedly. An extreme notion about independence has made men much less generous in receiving.

*Dunsford.* It is a falling off, then. There was another comment I had to make. I think, when you speak about the exorbitant demands of neglected merit, you should say more upon the neglect of the just demands of merit.

*Milverton.* I would have the Government and the public in general try by all means to understand and reward merit, especially in those matters wherein excellence cannot, otherwise, meet with large present reward. But, to say the truth, I would have this done, not with the view of fostering genius so much as of fulfilling duty: I would say to a minister—it is becoming in you—it is well for the nation, to reward, as far as you can, and dignify, men of genius. Whether you will do them any good, or bring forth more of them, I do not know.

*Ellesmere.* Men of great genius are often such a sensitive race, so apt to be miserable in many other than pecuniary ways and want of public estimation, that I am not sure that distress and neglect do not take their minds off worse discomforts. It is a kind of grievance, too, that they like to have.

*Dunsford.* Really, Ellesmere, that is a most unfeeling speech.

*Milverton.* At any rate, it is right for us to honour and serve a great man. It is our nature to do so, if we are worth anything. We may put aside the question whether our honour will do him more good than our neglect. That is a question for him to look to. The world has not yet so largely honoured deserving men in their own time, that we can exactly pronounce what effect it would have upon them.

*Ellesmere.* Come, Rollo, let us leave these men of sentiment. Oh, you will not go, as your master does not move. Look how he wags his tail, and almost says, "I should dearly like to have a hunt after the water-rat we saw in the pond the other day, but master is talking philosophy, and requires an intelligent audience." These dogs are dear creatures, it must be owned. Come, Milverton, let us have a walk.

## CHAPTER IX.

AFTER the reading in the last chapter, my friends walked homewards with me as far as Durley Wood, which is about half-way between Worth-Ashton and my house. As we rested here, we bethought ourselves that it would be a pleasant spot for us to come to sometimes and read our essays. So we agreed to name a day for meeting there. The day was favourable, we met as we had appointed, and finding some beech logs lying very opportunely, took possession of them for our council. We seated Ellesmere on one that we called the woolsack, but which he said he felt himself unworthy to occupy in the presence of King Log, pointing to mine. These nice points of etiquette being at last settled, Milverton drew out his papers and was about to begin reading, when Ellesmere thus interrupted him:—

*Ellesmere.* You were not in earnest, Milverton, about giving us an essay on population? Because if so, I think I shall leave this place to you and Dunsford and the ants.

*Milverton.* I certainly have been meditating something of the sort; but have not been able to make much of it.

*Ellesmere.* If I had been living in those days when it first beamed upon mankind that the earth was round, I am sure I should have said, "We know now the bounds of the earth; there are no interminable plains joined to the regions of the sun, allowing of indefinite sketchy outlines at the edges of maps. That little creature man will immediately begin to think that his world is too small for him."

*Milverton.* There has probably been as much folly uttered

by political economy as against it, which is saying something. The danger as regards theories of political economy is the obvious one of their abstract conclusions being applied to concrete things.

*Ellesmere.* As if we were to expect mathematical lines to bear weights.

*Milverton.* Something like that. With a good system of logic pervading the public mind, this danger would of course be avoided; but such a state of mind is not likely to occur in any public that we or our grandchildren are likely to have to deal with. As it is, an ordinary man hears some conclusion of political economy, showing some particular tendency of things, which in real life meets with many counteractions of all kinds; but he, perhaps, adopts the conclusion without the least abatement, and would work it into life, as if all went on there like a rule-of-three sum.

*Ellesmere.* After all, this error arises from the man's not having enough political economy. It is not that a theory is good on paper, but unsound in real life. It is only that in real life you cannot get at the simple state of things to which the theory would rightly apply. You want many other theories and the just composition of them all to be able to work the whole problem. That being done (which, however, scarcely can be done), the result on paper might be read off as applicable at once to life. But now, touching the essay; since we are not to have population, what is it to be?

*Milverton.* Public improvements.

*Ellesmere.* Nearly as bad; but as this is a favourite subject of yours, I suppose it will not be polite to go away.

*Milverton.* No; you must listen.

## PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS.

What are possessions? To an individual, the stores of his own heart and mind pre-eminently. His truth and valour are amongst the first. His contentedness, or his resignation, may be put next. Then his sense of beauty, surely a possession of great moment to him. Then all those mixed possessions which result from the social affections—great possessions, unspeakable delights, much greater than the gift last mentioned in the former class, but held on more uncertain tenure. Lastly, what are generally called possessions? However often we have heard of the vanity, uncertainty, and vexation that beset these last, we must not let this repetition deaden our minds to the fact.

Now, national possessions must be estimated by the same gradation that we have applied to individual possessions. If we consider national luxury, we shall see how small a part it may add to national happiness. Men of deserved renown, and peerless women, lived upon what we should now call the coarsest fare, and paced the rushes in their rooms with as high or as contented thoughts as their better-fed or better-clothed descendants can boast of. Man is limited in this direction ; I mean in the things that concern his personal gratification ; but when you come to the higher enjoyments, the expansive power both in him and them is greater. As Keats says—

“ A thing of beauty is a joy for ever ;  
Its loveliness increases ; it will never  
Pass into nothingness ; but still will keep  
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep  
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.”

What then are a nation's possessions? The great words

that have been said in it; the great deeds that have been done in it; the great buildings, and the great works of art, that have been made in it. A man says a noble saying: it is a possession, first to his own race, then to mankind. A people get a noble building built for them: it is an honour to them, also a daily delight and instruction. It perishes. The remembrance of it is still a possession. If it was indeed pre-eminent, there will be more pleasure in thinking of it than in being with others of inferior order and design.

On the other hand, a thing of ugliness is potent for evil. It deforms the taste of the thoughtless; it frets the man who knows how bad it is; it is a disgrace to the nation who raised it; an example and an occasion for more monstrosities. If it is a great building in a great city, thousands of people pass it daily, and are the worse for it, or at least not the better. It must be done away with. Next to the folly of doing a bad thing is that of fearing to undo it. We must not look at what it has cost, but at what it is. Millions may be spent upon some foolish device which will not the more make it into a possession, but only a more noticeable detriment.

It must not be supposed that works of art are the only, or the chief, public improvements needed in any country. Wherever men congregate, the elements become scarce. The supply of air, light, and water is then a matter of the highest public importance; and the magnificent utilitarianism of the Romans should precede the nice sense of beauty of the Greeks. Or, rather, the former should be worked out in the latter. Sanitary improvements, like most good works, may be made to fulfil many of the best human objects. Charity, social order, conveniency of living, and the love of

the beautiful, may all be furthered by such improvements. A people is seldom so well employed as when, not suffering their attention to be absorbed by foreign quarrels and domestic broils, they bethink themselves of winning back those blessings of Nature which assemblages of men mostly vitiate, exclude, or destroy.

Public improvements are sometimes most difficult in free countries. The origination of them is difficult there, many diverse minds having to be persuaded. The individual, or class, resistance to the public good is harder to conquer than in despotic states. And, what is most embarrassing, perhaps, individual progress in the same direction, or individual doings in some other way, form a great hindrance, sometimes, to public enterprise. On the other hand, the energy of a free people is a mine of public welfare; and individual effort brings many good things to bear in much shorter time than any government could be expected to move in. A judicious statesman considers these things; and sets himself especially to overcome those peculiar obstacles to public improvement which belong to the institutions of his country. Adventure in a despotic state, combined action in a free state, are the objects which peculiarly demand his attention.

To return to works of art. In this also the genius of the people is to be heeded. There may have been, there may be, nations requiring to be diverted from the love of art to stern labour and industrial conquests. But certainly it is not so with the Anglo-Saxon race, or with the Northern races generally. Money may enslave them; logic may enslave them; art never will. The chief men, therefore, in these races will do well sometimes to contend against the popular current, and to convince their people that there

are other sources of delight, and other objects worthy of human endeavour, than severe money-getting or mere material successes of any kind.

In fine, the substantial improvement, and even the embellishment of towns, is a work which both the central and local governing bodies in a country should keep a steady hand upon. It especially concerns them. What are they there for but to do that which individuals cannot do? It concerns them, too, as it tells upon the health, morals, education, and refined pleasures of the people they govern. In doing it, they should avoid pedantry, parsimony, and favouritism; and their mode of action should be large, considerate, and foreseeing. Large, inasmuch as they must not easily be contented with the second best in any of their projects. Considerate, inasmuch as they have to think what their people need most, not what will make most show. And therefore they should be contented, for instance, at their work going on underground for a time, or in byways, if needful; the best charity in public works, as in private, being often that which courts least notice. Lastly, their work should be with foresight, recollecting that cities grow up about us like young people, before we are aware of it.

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*Ellesmere.* Another very merciful essay! When we had once got upon the subject of sanitary improvements, I thought we should soon be five fathom deep in blue-books, reports, interminable questions of sewerage, and horrors of all kinds.

*Milverton.* I am glad you own that I have been very tender of your impatience in this essay. People, I trust, are now so fully aware of the immense importance of sanitary improvements, that we do not want the elementary



talking about such things that was formerly necessary. It is difficult, though, to say too much about sanitary matters, that is, if by saying much one could gain attention. I am convinced that the most fruitful source of physical evil to mankind has been impure air, arising from circumstances which might have been obviated. Plagues and pestilences of all kinds, cretinism too, and all scrofulous disorders, are probably mere questions of ventilation. A district may require ventilation as well as a house.

*Ellesmere.* Seriously speaking, I quite agree with you. And what delights me in sanitary improvements is, that they can hardly do harm. Give a poor man good air, and you do not diminish his self-reliance. You only add to his health and vigour—make more of a man of him. But now that the public mind, as it is facetiously called, has got hold of the idea of these improvements, everybody will be chattering about them.

*Milverton.* The very time when those who really do care for these matters should be watchful to make the most of the tide in their favour, and should not suffer themselves to relax their efforts because there is no originality now about such things.

*Dunsford.* Custom soon melts off the wings which Novelty alone has lent to Benevolence.

*Ellesmere.* And down comes the charitable Icarus. A very good simile, my dear Dunsford, but rather of the Latin-verse order. I almost see it worked into an hexameter and pentameter, and delighting the heart of an Eton boy.

*Dunsford.* Ellesmere is more than usually vicious to-day, Milverton. A great "public improvement" would be to clip the tongues of some of these lawyers.

*Ellesmere.* Possibly. I have just been looking again at

that part of the essay, Milverton, where you talk of the little gained by national luxury. I think with you. There is an immensity of nonsense uttered about making people happy, which is to be done, according to happiness-mongers, by quantities of sugar and tea, and such-like things. One knows the importance of food, but there is no Elysium to be got out of it.

*Milverton.* I know what you mean. There is a kind of pity for the people now in vogue which is most effeminate. It is a sugared sort of Robespierre talk about "The poor but virtuous People." To address such stuff to the people is not to give them anything, but to take away what they have. Suppose you could give them oceans of tea and mountains of sugar, and abundance of any luxury that you choose to imagine, but at the same time you inserted a hungry, envious spirit in them, what have you done? Then, again, this envious spirit, when it is turned to difference of station, what good can it do? Can you give station according to merit? Is life long enough for it?

*Ellesmere.* Of course we cannot always be weighing men with nicety, and saying, "Here is your place, here yours."

*Milverton.* Then, again, what happiness do you confer on men by teaching them to disrespect their superiors in rank, by turning all the embellishments which adorn various stations wrong side out, putting everything in its lowest form, and then saying, "What do you see to admire here?" You do not know what injury you may do a man when you destroy all reverence in him. It will be found out some day that men derive more pleasure and profit from having superiors than from having inferiors.

*Dunsford.* It is seldom that I bring you back to your subject, but we are really a long way off at present; and I want to know, Milverton, what you would do specifically in

the way of public improvements. Of course you cannot say in an essay what you would do in such matters, but amongst ourselves. In London, for instance.

*Milverton.* The first thing for Government to do, Dunsford, in London, or any other great town, is to secure open spaces in it and about it. Trafalgar Square may be dotted with hideous absurdities, but it is an open space. They may collect together there specimens of every variety of meanness and bad taste; but they cannot prevent its being a better thing than if it were covered with houses. Public money is scarcely ever so well employed as in securing bits of waste ground and keeping them as open spaces. Then, as under the most favourable circumstances, we are likely to have too much carbon in the air of any town, we should plant trees to restore the just proportions of the air as far as we can.<sup>1</sup> Trees are also what the heart and the eye desire most in towns. The Boulevards in Paris show the excellent effect of trees against buildings. There are many parts of London where rows of trees might be planted along the streets. The weighty dulness of Portland Place, for instance, might be thus relieved. Of course, in any scheme of public improvements, the getting rid of smoke is one of the first objects.

*Ellesmere.* Yes, smoke is a great abuse; but then there is something ludicrous about it, just as there is about sewerage. I believe, myself, that for one person that the Corn Laws have injured, a dozen have had their lives shortened and their happiness abridged in every way by these less palpable nuisances. But there is no grandeur in opposing them—no “good cry” to be raised. And so, as abuses cannot be met in our days but by agitation—a committee, secretaries, clerks, newspapers, and a review—and

<sup>1</sup> See *Health of Towns Report*, 1844, vol. i. p. 44.

as agitation in this case holds out fewer inducements than usual, we have gone on year after year being poisoned by these various nuisances, at an incalculable expense of life and money.

*Milverton.* There is something in what you say, I think, but you press it too far ; for of late these sanitary subjects have worked themselves into notice, as you yourself admit.

*Ellesmere.* Late indeed.

*Milverton.* Well, but to go on with schemes for improving London. Open spaces, trees—then comes the supply of water. This is one of the first things to be done. Philadelphia has given an example which all towns ought to imitate. It is a matter requiring great thought, and the various plans should be thoroughly canvassed before the choice is made. Great beauty and the highest utility may be combined in supplying a town like London with water. By the way, how much water do you think London requires daily?

*Ellesmere.* As much as the Serpentine and the water in St. James's Park.

*Milverton.* You are not so far out.

Well, then, having gone through the largest things that must be attended to, we come to minor matters. It is a great pity that the system of building upon leases should be so commonly adopted. Nobody expects to live out the leasehold term which he takes to build upon. But things would be better done if people were more averse to having anything to do with leasehold property. C. always says that the modern lath-and-plaster system is a wickedness, and upon my word I think he is right. It is inconceivable to me how a man can make up his mind to build, or to do anything else, in a temporary, slight, insincere fashion. What has a man to say for himself who must sum up the

doings of his life in this way, "I chiefly employed myself in making or selling things which seemed to be good and were not, and nobody has occasion to bless me for anything I have done."

*Ellesmere.* Humph! you put it mildly. But the man has made perhaps seven per cent. off his money; or, if he has made no per cent., has ruined several men of his own trade, which is not to go for nothing when a man is taking stock of his good deeds.

*Milverton.* There is one thing I forgot to say, that we want more individual will in building, I think. As it is at present, a great builder takes a plot of ground and turns out innumerable houses, all alike, the same faults and merits running through each, thus adding to the general dulness of things.

*Ellesmere.* Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, when she came from abroad, remarked that all her friends seemed to have got into drawing-rooms which were like a grand piano, first a large square or oblong room, and then a small one. Quite Georgian, this style of architecture. But now I think we are improving immensely—at any rate in the outside of houses. By the way, Milverton, I want to ask you one thing: How is it that Governments and Committees, and the bodies that manage matters of taste, seem to be more tasteless than the average run of people? I will wager anything that the cabmen round Trafalgar Square would have made a better thing of it than it is. If you had put before them several prints of fountains, they would not have chosen those.

*Milverton.* I think with you, but I have no theory to account for it. I suppose that these committees are frequently hampered by other considerations than those which come before the public when they are looking at the work

done; and this may be some excuse. There was a custom which I have heard prevailed in former days in some of the Italian cities, of making large models of the works of art that were to adorn the city, and putting them up in the places intended for the works when finished, and then inviting criticism. It would really be a very good plan in some cases.

*Ellesmere.* Now, Milverton, would you not forthwith pull down such things as Buckingham Palace and the National Gallery? Dunsford looks at me as if I were going to pull down the Constitution.

*Milverton.* I would pull them down to a certainty, or some parts of them at any rate; but whether "forthwith" is another question. There are greater things, perhaps, to be done first. We must consider, too,

"That eternal want of pence  
Which vexes public men."

Still, I think we ought always to look upon such buildings as temporary arrangements, and they vex one less then. The Palace ought to be in the higher part of the Park, perhaps on that slope opposite Piccadilly.

*Dunsford.* Well, it does amuse me the way in which you youngsters go on, pulling down, in your industrious imaginations, palaces and national galleries, building aqueducts and cloacæ maximæ, forming parks, destroying smoke (so large a part of every Londoner's diet), and abridging plaster, without fear of Chancellors of the Exchequer, and the resistance of mankind in general.

*Milverton.* We must begin by thinking boldly about things. That is a larger part of any undertaking than it seems, perhaps.

*Dunsford.* We must, I am afraid, break off our pleasant

employment of projecting public improvements, unless we mean to be dinnerless.

*Ellesmere.* A frequent fate of great projectors, I fear.

*Milverton.* Now, then, homewards.

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## CHAPTER X.

My readers will, perhaps, agree with me in being sorry to find that we are coming to the end of our present series. I say "my readers," though I have so little part in purveying for them, that I mostly consider myself one of them. It is no light task, however, to give a good account of a conversation; and I say this, and would wish people to try whether I am not right in saying so, not to call attention to my labour in the matter, but because it may be well to notice how difficult it is to report anything truly. Were this better known, it might be an aid to charity, and prevent some of those feuds which grow out of the poverty of man's power to express, to apprehend, to represent, rather than out of any malignant part of his nature. But I must not go on moralising. I almost feel that Ellesmere is looking over my shoulder, and breaking into my discourse with sharp words, which I have lately been so much accustomed to.

I had expected that we should have many more readings this summer, as I knew that Milverton had prepared more essays for us. But finding, as he said, that the other subjects he had in hand were larger than he had anticipated, or was prepared for, he would not read even to *us* what he had written. Though I was very sorry for this—for I may not be the chronicler in another year—I could not but say

he was right. Indeed, my ideas of literature, nourished as they have been in much solitude, and by the reading, if I may say so, mainly of our classical authors, are very high placed, though I hope not fantastical. And, therefore, I would not discourage any one in expending whatever thought and labour might be in him upon any literary work.

In fine, then, I did not attempt to dissuade Milverton from his purpose of postponing our readings; and we agreed that there should only be one more for the present. I wished it to be at our favourite place on the lawn, which had become endeared to me as the spot of many of our friendly councils.

It was later than usual when I came over to Worth-Ashton for this reading; and as I gained the brow of the hill, some few clouds tinged with red were just grouping together to form the accustomed pomp upon the exit of the setting sun. I believe I mentioned in the introduction to our first conversation that the ruins of an old castle could be seen from our place of meeting. Milverton and Ellesmere were talking about it as I joined them.

*Milverton.* Yes, Ellesmere, many a man has looked out of those windows upon a sunset like this, with some of the thoughts that must come into the minds of all men on seeing this great emblem, the setting sun—has felt, in looking at it, his coming end, or the closing of his greatness. Those old walls must have been witness to every kind of human emotion. Henry the Second was there; John, I think; Margaret of Anjou and Cardinal Beaufort; William of Wykeham; Henry the Eighth's Cromwell; and many others who have made some stir in the world.

*Ellesmere.* And, perhaps, the greatest there were those who made no stir.

“The world knows nothing of its greatest men.”



*Milverton.* I am slow to believe that. I cannot well reconcile myself to the idea that great capacities are given for nothing. They bud out in some way or other.

*Ellesmere.* Yes, but it may not be in a noisy way.

*Milverton.* There is one thing that always strikes me very much in looking at the lives of men: how soon, as it were, their course seems to be determined. They say, or do, or think something which gives a bias at once to the whole of their career.

*Dunsford.* You may go further back than that, and speak of the impulses they got from their ancestors.

*Ellesmere.* Or the nets around them of other people's ways and wishes. There are many things, you see, that go to make men puppets.

*Milverton.* I was only noticing the circumstance that there was such a thing, as it appeared to me, as this early direction. But, if it has been ever so unfortunate, a man's folding his hands over it in a melancholy mood, and suffering himself to be made a puppet by it, is a sadly weak proceeding. Most thoughtful men have probably some dark fountains in their souls, by the side of which, if there were time, and it were decorous, they could let their thoughts sit down and wail indefinitely. That long Byron wail fascinated men for a time; because there is that in Human Nature. Luckily, a great deal besides.

*Ellesmere.* I delight in the helpful and hopeful men.

*Milverton.* A man that I admire very much, and have met with occasionally, is one who is always of use in any matter he is mixed up with, simply because he wishes that the best should be got out of the thing that is possible. There does not seem much in the description of such a character; but only see it in contrast with that of a brilliant

man, for instance, who does not ever fully care about the matter in hand.

*Dunsford.* I can thoroughly imagine the difference.

*Milverton.* The human race may be bound up together in some mysterious way, each of us having a profound interest in the fortunes of the whole, and so, to some extent, of every portion of it. Such a man as I have described acts as though he had an intuitive perception of that relation, and therefore a sort of family feeling for mankind, which gives him satisfaction in making the best out of any human affair he has to do with.

But we really must have the essay, and not talk any more. It is on History.

## HISTORY.

Among the fathomless things that are about us and within us, is the continuity of time. This gives to life one of its most solemn aspects. We may think to ourselves: Would there could be some halting-place in life, where we could stay, collecting our minds, and see the world drift by us. But no: even while you read this, you are not pausing to read it. As one of the great French preachers, I think, says, We are embarked upon a stream, each in his own little boat, which must move uniformly onwards, till it ceases to move at all. It is a stream that knows "no haste, no rest;" a boat that knows no haven but one.

This unabated continuity suggests the past as well as the future. We would know what mighty empires this stream of time has flowed through, by what battle-fields it has been tinged, how it has been employed towards fertility, and what beautiful shadows on its surface have been seized by art, or science, or great words, and held in time-lasting, if not in everlasting, beauty. This is what history tells us.

Often in a faltering, confused, be-darkened way, like the deed it chronicles. But it is what we have, and we must make the best of it.

The subject of this essay may be thus divided: Why history should be read—how it should be read—by whom it should be written—how it should be written—and how good writers of history should be called forth, aided, and rewarded.

#### I. WHY HISTORY SHOULD BE READ.

It takes us out of too much care for the present; it extends our sympathies; it shows us that other men have had their sufferings and their grievances; it enriches discourse, it enlightens travel. So does fiction. But the effect of history is more lasting and suggestive. If we see a place which fiction has treated of, we feel that it has some interest for us; but show us a spot where remarkable deeds have been done, or remarkable people have lived, and our thoughts cling to it. We employ our own imagination about it: we invent the fiction for ourselves. Again, history is at least the conventional account of things: that which men agree to receive as the right account, and which they discuss as true. To understand their talk, we must know what they are talking about. Again, there is something in history which can seldom be got from the study of the lives of individual men; namely, the movements of men collectively, and for long periods—of man, in fact, not of men. In history the composition of the forces that move the world has to be analysed. We must have before us the law of the progress of opinion, the interruptions to it of individual character, the principles on which men act in the main, the trade winds, as we may say, in human affairs, and the recurrent storms which one man's life does not tell us

of. Again, by the study of history, we have a chance of becoming tolerant, travelling over the ways of many nations and many periods; and we may also acquire that historic tact by which we collect upon one point of human affairs the light of many ages.

We may judge of the benefit of historical studies by observing what great defects are incident to the moral and political writers who know nothing of history. A present grievance, or what seems such, swallows up in their minds all other considerations; their little bottle of oil is to still the raging waves of the whole human ocean; their system, a thing that the historian has seen before, perhaps, in many ages, is to reconcile all diversities. Then they would persuade you that this class of men is wholly good, that wholly bad; or that there is no difference between good and bad. They may be shrewd men, considering what they have seen, but would be much shrewder if they could know how small a part that is of life. We may all refer to our boyhood, and recollect the time when we thought the things about us were the type of all things everywhere. That was, perhaps, after all no silly princess who was for feeding the famishing people on cakes. History takes us out of this confined circle of child-like thought; and shows us what are the perennial aims, struggles, and distractions of mankind.

History has always been set down as the especial study for statesmen, and for men who take an interest in public affairs. For history is to nations what biography is to individual men. History is the chart and compass for national endeavour. Our early voyagers are dead: not a plank remains of the old ships that first essayed unknown waters; the sea retains no track; and were it not for the history of these voyages contained in charts, in chronicles,

in hoarded lore of all kinds, each voyager, though he were to start with all the aids of advanced civilisation (if you could imagine such a thing without history), would need the boldness of the first voyager.

And so it would be with the statesman, were the civil history of mankind unknown. We live to some extent in peace and comfort upon the results obtained for us by the chronicles of our forefathers. We do not see this without some reflection. But imagine what a full-grown nation would be if it knew no history—like a full-grown man with only a child's experience.

The present is an age of remarkable experiences. Vast improvements have been made in several of the outward things that concern life nearly, from intercourse rapid as lightning to surgical operation without pain. We accept them all; still, the difficulties of government, the management of ourselves, our relations with others, and many of the prime difficulties of life remain but little subdued. History still claims our interest, is still wanted to make us think and act with any breadth of wisdom.

At the same time, however, that we claim for history great powers of instruction, we must not imagine the examples which it furnishes will enable its readers to anticipate the experience of life. An experienced man reads that Cæsar did this or that, but he says to himself, "I am not Cæsar." Or, indeed, as is most probable, the reader has not to reject the application of the example to himself: for from first to last he sees nothing but experience for Cæsar in what Cæsar was doing. I think it may be observed, too, that general maxims about life gain the ear of the inexperienced, in preference to historical examples. But neither wise sayings nor historical examples can be understood without experience. Words are only symbols. Who can know anything

soundly with respect to the complicated affections and struggles of life, unless he has experienced some of them? All knowledge of humanity spreads from within. So in studying history, the lessons it teaches must have something to grow round in the heart they teach. Our own trials, misfortunes, and enterprises are the best lights by which we can read history. Hence it is that many an historian may see far less into the depths of the very history he has himself written than a man who, having acted and suffered, reads the history in question with all the wisdom that comes from action and suffering. Sir Robert Walpole might naturally exclaim, "Do not read history to me, for that, I know, must be false." But if he had read it, I do not doubt that he would have seen through the film of false and insufficient narrative into the depth of the matter narrated, in a way that men of great experience can alone attain to.

## II. HOW HISTORY SHOULD BE READ.

I suppose that many who now connect the very word history with the idea of dulness, would have been fond and diligent students of history if it had had fair access to their minds. But they were set down to read histories which were not fitted to be read continuously, or by any but practised students. Some such works are mere framework, a name which the author of the *Statesman* applies to them; very good things, perhaps, for their purpose, but that is not to invite readers to history. You might almost as well read dictionaries with a hope of getting a succinct and clear view of language. When, in any narration, there is a constant heaping up of facts, made about equally significant by the way of telling them, a hasty delineation of characters, and all the incidents moving on as in the fifth act of a confused

tragedy, the mind and memory refuse to be so treated ; and the reading ends in nothing but a very slight and inaccurate acquaintance with the mere husk of the history. You cannot epitomise the knowledge that it would take years to acquire into a few volumes that may be read in as many weeks.

The most likely way of attracting men's attention to historical subjects will be by presenting them with small portions of history, of great interest, thoroughly examined. This may give them the habit of applying thought and criticism to historical matters.

For, as it is, how are people interested in history ? and how do they master its multitudinous assemblage of facts ? Mostly, perhaps, in this way. A man cares about some one thing, or person, or event, and plunges into its history, really wishing to master it. This pursuit extends ; other points of research are taken up by him at other times. His researches begin to intersect. He finds a connection in things. The texture of his historic acquisitions gradually attains some substance and colour ; and so at last he begins to have some dim notions of the myriads of men who came, and saw, and did not conquer—only struggled on as they best might, some of them—and are not.

When we are considering how history should be read, the main thing perhaps is, that the person reading should desire to know what he is reading about, not merely to have read the books that tell of it. The most elaborate and careful historian must omit, or pass lightly over, many points of his subject. He writes for all readers, and cannot indulge private fancies. But history has its particular aspect for each man ; there must be portions which he may be expected to dwell upon. And everywhere, even where the history is most laboured, the reader should have something

of the spirit of research which was needful for the writer ; if only so much as to ponder well the words of the writer. That man reads history, or anything else, at great peril of being thoroughly misled, who has no perception of any truthfulness except that which can be fully ascertained by reference to facts ; who does not in the least perceive the truth, or the reverse, of a writer's style, of his epithets, of his reasoning, of his mode of narration. In life, our faith in any narration is much influenced by the personal appearance, voice, and gesture of the person narrating. There is some part of all these things in his writing ; and you must look into that well before you can know what faith to give him. One man may make mistakes in names, and dates, and references, and yet have a real substance of truthfulness in him, a wish to enlighten himself and then you. Another may not be wrong in his facts, but have a declamatory or sophistical vein in him, much to be guarded against. A third may be both inaccurate and untruthful, caring not so much for anything as to write his book. And if the reader cares only to read it, sad work they make between them of the memories of former days.

In studying history, it must be borne in mind that a knowledge is necessary of the state of manners, customs, wealth, arts, and science at the different periods treated of. The text of civil history requires a context of this knowledge in the mind of the reader. For the same reason, some of the main facts of the geography of the countries in question should be present to him. If we are ignorant of these aids to history, all history is apt to seem alike to us. It becomes merely a narrative of men of our own time, in our own country ; and then we are prone to expect the same views and conduct from them that we do from our contemporaries. It is true that the heroes of antiquity have



been represented on the stage in bag-wigs, and the rest of the costume of our grandfathers; but it was the great events of their lives that were thus told—the crisis of their passions—and when we are contemplating the representation of great passions and their consequences, all minor imagery is of little moment. In a long-drawn narrative, however, the more we have in our minds of what concerned the daily life of the people we read about, the better. And in general it may be said that history, like travelling, gives a return in proportion to the knowledge that a man brings to it.

### III. BY WHOM HISTORY SHOULD BE WRITTEN.

Before entering directly on this part of the subject, it is desirable to consider a little the difficulties in the way of writing history. We all know the difficulty of getting at the truth of matter which happened yesterday, and about which we can examine the living actors upon oath. But in history the most significant things may lack the most important part of their evidence. The people who were making history were not thinking of the convenience of future writers of history. Often the historian must contrive to get his insight into matters from evidence of men and things which is like bad pictures of them. The contemporary, if he knew the man, said of the picture, "I should have known it, but it has very little of him in it." The poor historian, with no original before him, has to see through the bad picture into the man. Then, supposing our historian rich in well-selected evidence—I say well-selected, because, as students tell us, for many an historian one authority is of the same weight as another, provided they are both of the same age; still, how difficult is narration even to the man who is rich in well-selected evidence. What a tendency

there is to round off a narrative into falsehood ; or else by parenthesis to destroy its pith and continuity. Again, the historian knows the end of many of the transactions he narrates. If he did not, how differently often he would narrate them. It would be a most instructive thing to give a man the materials for the account of a great transaction, stopping short of the end, and then see how different would be his account from the ordinary ones. Fools have been hardly dealt with in the saying that the event is their master (*"eventus stultorum magister"*), seeing how it rules us all. And in nothing more than in history. The event is always present to our minds ; along the pathways to it, the historian and the moralist have walked till they are beaten pathways, and we imagine that they were so to the men who first went along them. Indeed, we almost fancy that these ancestors of ours, looking along the beaten path, foresaw the event as we do ; whereas they mostly stumbled upon it suddenly in the forest. This knowledge of the end we must, therefore, put down as one of the most dangerous pitfalls which beset the writers of history. Then consider the difficulty in the "composition," to use an artist's word, of our historian's picture. Before both the artist and the historian lies Nature as far as the horizon ; how shall they choose that portion of it which has some unity and which shall represent the rest ? What method is needful in the grouping of facts ; what learning, what patience, what accuracy !

By whom, then, should history be written ? In the first place, by men of some experience in real life ; who have acted and suffered ; who have been in crowds, and seen, perhaps felt, how madly men can care about nothings ; who have observed how much is done in the world in an uncertain manner, upon sudden impulses and very little reason ; and who, therefore, do not think themselves bound

to have a deep-laid theory for all things. They should be men who have studied the laws of the affections, who know how much men's opinions depend on the time in which they live, how they vary with their age and their position. To make themselves historians, they should also have considered the combinations amongst men and the laws that govern such things; for there are laws. Moreover, our historians, like most men who do great things, must combine in themselves qualities which are held to belong to opposite natures; must at the same time be patient in research and vigorous in imagination, energetic and calm, cautious and enterprising. Such historians, wise, as we may suppose they will be, about the affairs of other men, may, let us hope, be sufficiently wise about their own affairs to understand that no great work can be done without great labour, that no great labour ought to look for its reward. But my readers will exclaim as Rasselas to Imlac on hearing the requisites for a poet, "Enough! thou hast convinced me that no human being can ever be *an historian*. Proceed with thy narration."

#### IV. HOW HISTORY SHOULD BE WRITTEN.

One of the first things in writing history is for the historian to recollect that it is history he is writing. The narrative must not be oppressed by reflections, even by wise ones. Least of all should the historian suffer himself to become entangled by a theory or a system. If he does, each fact is taken up by him in a particular way: those facts that cannot be so handled cease to be his facts, and those that offer themselves conveniently are received too fondly by him.

Then, although our historian must not be mastered by

system, he must have some way of taking up his facts and of classifying them. They must not be mere isolated units in his eyes, else he is mobbed by them. And a man in the midst of a crowd, though he may know the names and nature of all the crowd, cannot give an account of their doings. Those who look down from the housetop must do that.

But, above all things, the historian must get out of his own age into the time in which he is writing. Imagination is as much needed for the historian as the poet. You may combine bits of books with other bits of books, and so make some new combinations, and this may be done accurately, and, in general, much of the subordinate preparation for history may be accomplished without any great effort of imagination. But to write history in any large sense of the words, you must be able to comprehend other times. You must know that there is a right and wrong which is not your right and wrong, but yet stands upon the right and wrong of all ages and all hearts. You must also appreciate the outward life and colours of the period you write about. Try to think how the men you are telling of would have spent a day, what were their leading ideas, what they cared about. Grasp the body of the time, and give it to us. If not, and these men could look at your history, they would say, "This is all very well; we daresay some of these things did happen; but we were not thinking of these things all day long. It does not represent us."

After enlarging upon this great requisite, imagination, it seems somewhat prosaic to come down to saying that history requires accuracy. But I think I hear the sighs, and sounds more harsh than sighing, of those who have ever investigated anything, and found by dire experience

the deplorable inaccuracy which prevails in the world. And, therefore, I would say to the historian almost as the first suggestion, "Be accurate; do not make false references, do not mis-state: and men, if they get no light from you, will not execrate you. You will not stand in the way, and have to be explained and got rid of."

Another most important matter in writing history, and that indeed in which the art lies, is the method of narrating. This is a thing almost beyond rules, like the actual execution in music or painting. A man might have fairness, accuracy, an insight into other times, great knowledge of facts, some power even of arranging them, and yet make a narrative out of it all, so protracted here, so huddled together there, the purpose so buried or confused, that men would agree to acknowledge the merit of the book, and leave it unread. There must be a natural line of associations for the narrative to run along. The separate threads of the narrative must be treated separately, and yet the subject not be dealt with sectionally, for that is not the way in which the things occurred. The historian must, therefore, beware that those divisions of the subject which he makes for our ease and convenience, do not induce him to treat his subject in a flimsy manner. He must not make his story easy where it is not so.

After all, it is not by rule that a great history is to be written. Most thinkers agree that the main object for the historian is to get an insight into the things which he tells of, and then to tell them with the modesty of a man who is in the presence of great events; and must speak about them carefully, simply, and with but little of himself or of his affections thrown into the narration.

V. HOW GOOD WRITERS OF HISTORY SHOULD BE CALLED  
FORTH, AIDED, AND REWARDED.

Mainly by history being properly read. The direct ways of commanding excellence of any kind are very few, if any. When a State has found out its notable men, it should reward them, and will show its worthiness by its measure and mode of reward. But it cannot purchase them. It may do something in the way of aiding them. In history, for instance, the records of a nation may be discreetly managed, and some of the minor work, therefore, done to the hand of the historian. But the most likely method to ensure good historians is to have a fit audience for them. And this is a very difficult matter. In works of general literature, the circle of persons capable of judging is large; even in works of science or philosophy it is considerable; but in history it is a very confined circle. To the general body of readers, whether the history they read is true or not is in no way perceptible. It is quite as amusing to them when it is told in one way as in another. There is always mischief in error; but in this case the mischief is remote, or seems so. For men of ordinary culture, even if of much intelligence, the difficulty of discerning what is true or false in the histories they read makes it a matter of the highest duty for those few persons who can give us criticism on historical works, at least to save us from insolent and mendacious carelessness in historical writers, if not by just encouragement to secure for nations some results not altogether unworthy of the great enterprise which the writing of history holds out itself to be. "Hujus enim fidei exempla majorum, vicissitudines rerum, fundamenta prudentiæ civilis, hominum denique nomen et fama commissa sunt."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bacon, *De Augmentis Scientiarum*.

*Ellesmere.* Just wait a minute for me, and do not talk about the essay till I come back. I am going for Anster's *Faust*.

*Dunsford.* What has Ellesmere got in his head?

*Milverton.* I see. There is a passage where Faust, in his most discontented mood, falls foul of history—in his talk to Wagner, if I am not mistaken.

*Dunsford.* How beautiful it is this evening! Look at that yellow-green near the sunset.

*Milverton.* The very words that Coleridge uses. I always think of them when I see that tint.

*Dunsford.* I daresay his words were in my mind, but I have forgotten what you allude to.

*Milverton.*

“ O Lady! in this wan and heartless mood,  
To other thoughts by yonder throstle woo'd,  
All this long eve, so balmy and serene,  
Have I been gazing on the western sky,  
And its peculiar tint of yellow-green:  
And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye!  
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,  
That give away their motion to the stars;  
Those stars that glide behind them or between,  
Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:  
Yon crescent Moon as fixed as if it grew  
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;  
I see them all so excellently fair,  
I see, not feel how beautiful they are.”

*Dunsford.* Admirable! In the *Ode to Dejection*, is it not? where, too, there are those lines—

“ O Lady! we receive but what we give,  
And in our life alone does Nature live.”

*Milverton.* But here comes Ellesmere with triumphant

look. You look as jovial, my dear Ellesmere, as if you were a Bentley that had found a false quantity in a Boyle.

*Ellesmere.* Listen and perpend, my historical friends.

“To us, my friend, the times that are gone by  
Are a mysterious book, sealed with seven seals :  
That which you call the spirit of ages past  
Is but, in truth, the spirit of some few authors  
In which those ages are beheld reflected,  
With what distortion strange heaven only knows.  
Oh ! often, what a toilsome thing it is  
This study of thine—at the first glance we fly it.  
A mass of things confusedly heaped together ;  
A lumber-room of dusty documents,  
Furnished with all approved court-precedents  
And old traditional maxims ! History !  
Facts dramatised say rather—action—plot—  
Sentiment, everything the writer's own,  
As it best fits the web-work of his story,  
With here and there a solitary fact  
Of consequence, by those grave chroniclers  
Pointed with many a moral apophthegm,  
And wise old saws, learned at the puppet-shows.”

*Milverton.* Yes ; admirable lines ; they describe to the life the very faults we have been considering as the faults of badly-written histories. I do not see that they do much more.

*Ellesmere.*

“To us, my friend, the times that are gone by  
Are a mysterious book.”

*Milverton.* Those two first lines are the full expression of Faust's discontent—unmeasured as in the presence of a weak man who could not check him. But, if you come to look at the matter closely, you will see that the time present



is also in some sense a sealed book to us. Men that we live with daily we often think as little of as we do of Julius Cæsar, I was going to say—but we know much less of them than of him.

*Ellesmere.* I did not mean to say that Faust spoke my sentiments about history in general. Still, there are periods of history which we have very few authors to tell us about, and I daresay in some of those cases the colouring of their particular minds gives us a false idea of the whole age they lived in.

*Dunsford.* This may have happened, certainly.

*Milverton.* We must be careful not to expect too much from the history of past ages, as a means of understanding the present age. There is something wanted besides the preceding history to understand each age. Each individual life may have a problem of its own, which all other biography accurately set down for us might not enable us to work out. So of each age. It has something in it not known before, and tends to a result which is not down in any books.

*Dunsford.* Yet history must be of greatest use in discerning this tendency.

*Ellesmere.* Yes; but the Wagner sort of pedant would get entangled in his round of history—in his historical resemblances.

*Dunsford.* Now, Milverton, if you were called upon to say what are the peculiar characteristics of this age, what should you say?

*Ellesmere.* One of Dunsford's questions this, requiring a stout quarto volume with notes in answer.

*Milverton.* I would rather wait till I was called upon. I am apt to feel, after I have left off describing the character of any individual man, as if I had only just begun. And I

do not see the extent of discourse that would be needful in attempting to give the characteristics of an age.

*Ellesmere.* I think you are prudent to avoid answering Dunsford's question. For my own part, I should prefer giving an account of the age we live in after we have come to the end of it—in the true historical fashion. And so, Dunsford, you must wait for my notions.

*Dunsford.* I am afraid, Milverton, if you were to write history, you would never make up your mind to condemn anybody.

*Milverton.* I hope I should not be so inconclusive. I certainly do dislike to see any character, whether of a living or a dead person, disposed of in a summary way.

*Ellesmere.* For once I will come to the rescue of Milverton. I really do not see that a man's belief in the extent and variety of human character, and in the difficulty of appreciating the circumstances of life, should prevent him from writing history—from coming to some conclusions. Of course such a man is not likely to write a long course of history; but that I hold has been a frequent error in historians—that they have taken up subjects too large for them.

*Milverton.* If there is as much to be said about men's character and conduct as I think there mostly is, why should we be content with shallow views of them? Take the outward form of these hills and valleys before us. When we have seen them a few times, we think we know them, but are quite mistaken. Approaching from another quarter, it is almost new ground to us. It is a long time before you master the outward form and semblance of any small piece of country that has much life and diversity in it. I often think of this, applying it to our little knowledge of men. Now, look there a moment: you see that house;

close behind it is apparently a barren tract. In reality there is nothing of the kind there. A fertile valley with a great river in it, as you know, is between that house and the moors. But the plane of those moors and of the house is coincident from our present point of view. Had we not, as educated men, some distrust of the conclusions of our senses, we should be ready to swear that there was a lonely house on the border of the moors. It is the same in judging of men. We see a man connected with a train of action which is really not near him, absolutely foreign to him, perhaps, but in our eyes that is what he is always connected with. If there were not a Being who understands us immeasurably better than other men can, immeasurably better than we do ourselves, we should be badly off.

Such precautionary thoughts as these must be useful, I contend. They need not make us indifferent to character, or prevent us from forming judgments where we must form them, but they show us what a wide thing we are talking about when we are judging the life and nature of a man.

*Ellesmere.* I am sure, Dunsford, you are already convinced; you seldom want more than a slight pretext for going over to the charitable side of things. You are only afraid of not dealing stoutly enough with bad things and people. Do not be afraid, though. As long as you have me to abuse, you will say many unjust things against me, you know, so that you may waste yourself in good thoughts about the rest of the world, past and present. Do you know the lawyer's story I had in my mind then? "Many times when I have had a good case," he said, "I have failed; but then I have often succeeded with bad cases. And so justice is done."

*Milverton.* To return to the subject. It is not a sort of

equalising want of thought about men that I desire; only not to be rash in a matter that requires all our care and prudence.

*Dunsford.* Well, I believe I am won over. But now to another point. I think, Milverton, that you have said hardly anything about the use of history as an incentive to good deeds and a discouragement to evil ones.

*Milverton.* I ought to have done so. Bolingbroke gives in his *Letters on History*, talking of this point, a passage from Tacitus, "Præcipuum munus annalium,"—can you go on with it, Dunsford?

*Dunsford.* Yes, I think I can. It is a passage I have often seen quoted. "Præcipuum munus annalium, reor, ne virtutes sileantur; utque pravis dictis factisque ex posteritate et infamiâ metus sit."

*Ellesmere.* Well done; Dunsford may have invented it, though, for aught that we know, Milverton, and be passing himself off upon us for Tacitus.

*Milverton.* Then Bolingbroke goes on to say (I wish I could give you his own flowing words), that the great duty of history is to form a tribunal like that amongst the Egyptians which Diodorus tells of, where both common men and princes were tried after their deaths, and received appropriate honour or disgrace. The sentence was pronounced, he says, too late to correct or to recompense; but it was pronounced in time to render examples of general instruction to mankind. Now, what I was going to remark upon this is, that Bolingbroke understates his case. History well written is a present correction, and a foretaste of recompense, to the man who is now struggling with difficulties and temptations, now overcast by calumny and cloudy misrepresentation.

*Ellesmere.* Yes; many a man makes an appeal to

posterity which will never come before the court; but if there were no such court of appeal——

*Milverton.* A man's conviction that justice will be done to him in history is a secondary motive, and not one which, of itself, will compel him to do just and great things; but, at any rate, it forms one of the benefits that flow from history, and it becomes stronger as histories are better written. Much may be said against care for fame; much also against care for present repute. There is a diviner impulse than either at the doing of any actions that are much worth doing. As a correction, however, this anticipation of the judgment of history may really be very powerful. It is a great enlightenment of conscience to read the opinions of men on deeds similar to those we are engaged in or meditating.

*Dunsford.* I think Bolingbroke's idea, which I imagine was more general than yours, is more important; namely, that this judicial proceeding, mentioned by Diodorus Siculus, gave significant lessons to all people, not merely to those who had any chance of having their names in history.

*Milverton.* Certainly; for this is one of Bolingbroke's chief points, if I recollect rightly.

*Ellesmere.* Our conversations are much better things than your essays, Milverton.

*Milverton.* Of course I am bound to say so; but what made you think of that now?

*Ellesmere.* Why, I was thinking how in talk we can know exactly where we agree or differ. But I never like to interrupt the essay. I never know when it would come to an end if I did. And so it swims on like a sermon, having all its own way: one cannot put in an awkward question in a weak part, and get things looked at in various ways.

*Dunsford.* I suppose, then, Ellesmere, you would like to interrupt sermons.

*Ellesmere.* Why, yes, sometimes—do not throw sticks at me, Dunsford.

*Dunsford.* Well, it is absurd to be angry with you; because if you long to interrupt Milverton with his cautious perhapses and probablys, of course you will be impatient with discourses which do, to a certain extent, assume that the preacher and the hearers are in unison upon great matters.

*Ellesmere.* I am afraid to say anything about sermons, for fear of the *argumentum baculinum* from Dunsford; for many essay writers, like Milverton, delight to wind up their paragraphs with complete little aphorisms—shutting up something certainly, but shutting out something too. I could generally pause upon them a little.

*Milverton.* Of course one may err, Ellesmere, in too much aphorising as in too much of anything. But your argument goes against all expression of opinion, which must be incomplete, especially when dealing with matters that cannot be circumscribed by exact definitions. Otherwise a code of wisdom might be made which the fool might apply as well as the wisest man. Even the best proverb, though often the expression of the widest experience in the choicest language, can be thoroughly misapplied. It cannot embrace the whole of the subject, and apply in all cases like a mathematical formula. Its wisdom lies in the ear of the hearer.

*Ellesmere.* Well, I do not know that there is anything more to say about the essay. I suppose you are aware, Dunsford, that Milverton does not intend to give us any more essays for some time. He is distressing his mind about some facts which he wants to ascertain before he will

read any more to us. I imagine we are to have something historical next.

*Milverton.* Something in which historical records are useful.

*Ellesmere.* Really it is wonderful to see how beautifully human nature accommodates itself to anything, even to the listening to essays. I shall miss them.

*Milverton.* You may miss the talk before and after.

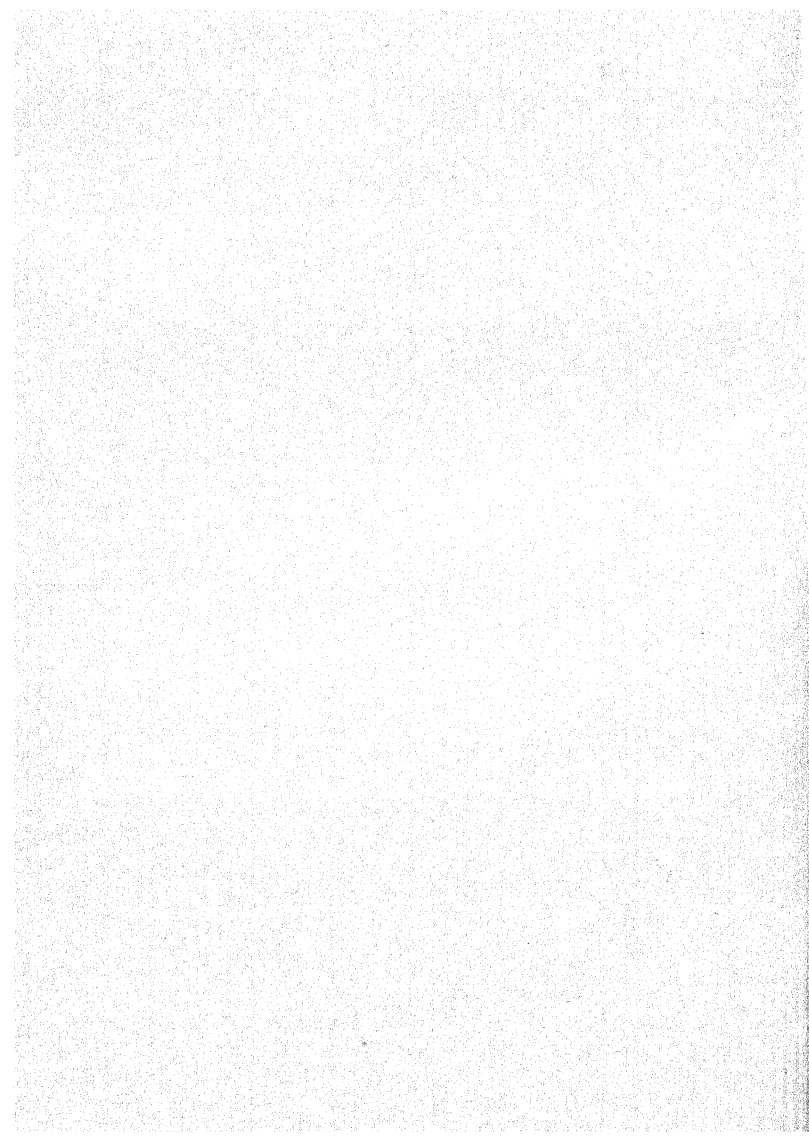
*Ellesmere.* Well, there is no knowing how much of that is provoked (provoked is a good word, is it not?) by the essays.

*Dunsford.* Then, for the present, we have come to an end of our readings.

*Milverton.* Yes, but I trust at no distant time to have something more to try your critical powers and patience upon. I hope that that old tower will yet see us meet together here on many a sunny day, discussing various things in friendly council.

*THE CLAIMS OF LABOUR.*





# THE CLAIMS OF LABOUR.



## CHAPTER I.

### MASTERS AND MEN.

It is a thing so common, as almost to be ridiculous, for a man to express self-distrust at the commencement of any attempt in speech or writing. And yet, trite as this mode of beginning is, its appropriateness makes each one use it as heartily as if it were new and true for him, though it might have been a commonplace for others. When he glances hurriedly across the wide extent of his subject, when he feels how inadequate his expression will be even to his conception, and, at the same time, has a yearning desire to bring his audience into the same mind with himself, it is no wonder if he begins with a few, hesitating, oft-repeated words about his own insufficiency compared with the greatness of his subject.

Happily, I have not occasion to dwell much upon the importance of the subject to which I am anxious to engage attention. For a long time it has been gradually emerging from the darkness in which it had been left. The claims of labour and the rights of the humble and the poor have

necessarily gained more of the attention of mankind, as Christianity has developed itself. That power was sure, in its gradual encroachments upon the evil nature of man, to make its voice heard in this matter. It is a voice which may come out of strange bodies, such as systems of ethics, or of politics ; but men may call it what they please, it goes on doing its appointed work, "conquering and to conquer."

Persons of a thoughtful mind seeing closely the falsehood, the folly, and the arrogance, of the age in which they live, are apt, occasionally, to have a great contempt for it ; and I doubt not that many a man looks upon the present time as one of feebleness and degeneracy. There are, however, signs of an increased solicitude for the claims of labour, which of itself is a thing of the highest promise, and more to be rejoiced over than all the mechanical triumphs which both those who would magnify, and those who would depreciate, the present age, would be apt to point to as containing its especial significance and merit.

But what do all these mechanical triumphs come to ? It is in vain that you have learned to move with double or treble the velocity of your immediate predecessors : it is in vain that you can show new modes of luxury, or new resources in art. The inquiring historian will give these things their weight, but will, nevertheless, persevere in asking how the great mass of the people were fed, and clothed, and taught ; and whether the improvement in their condition corresponded at all with the improvement of the condition of the middle and upper classes. What a sorry answer any one, replying for this age, would have to give him. Nor would it be enough, indeed, if we could make a satisfactory reply to his questions about the physical state of the people. We ought to be able to say that the different

orders of society were bound together by links of gratitude and regard : that they were not like layers of various coloured sand, but that they formed one solid whole of masonry, each part having its relation of use and beauty to all the others.

Certainly, if we look at the matter, we have not much to say for ourselves, unless it be in that dawning of good intentions which I have alluded to before. There is to be found in our metropolis, in our great towns, and even in our rural districts, an extent of squalid misery such as we are almost afraid to give heed to, and which we are glad to forget as soon as we have read or heard of it. It may be that our ancestors endured, it may be that many savage tribes still endure, far more privation than is to be found in the sufferings of our lowest class. But the mind refuses to consider the two states as analogous, and insists upon thinking that the state of physical and moral degradation often found amongst our working classes, with the arabesque of splendour and luxury which surrounds it, is a more shocking thing to contemplate than a pressing scarcity of provisions endured by a wandering horde of savage men sunk in equal barbarism. But when we follow men home, who have been co-operating with other civilised men in continuous labour throughout the livelong day, we should not, without experience, expect to find their homes dreary, comfortless, deformed with filth, such homes as poverty alone could not make. Still less, when we gaze upon some pleasant-looking village, fair enough in outward seeming for poets' songs to celebrate, should we expect to find scarcity of fuel, scantiness of food, prevalence of fever, the healthy huddled together with the sick, decency outraged, and self-respect all gone. And yet such sights, both in town and country, if not of habitual occurrence, are at any rate sadly

too numerous for us to pass them by as rare and exceptional cases.

Is this then the inevitable nature of things? Has the boasted civilisation of the world led only to this? Do we master the powers of nature only to let forth a new and fierce torrent of social miseries upon us? Let not such thoughts be ours. Pagans, the slaves of destiny, might well have held them. But we cannot doubt that the conditions of labour, under which man holds the earth, express the mercy and the goodness, no less than the judgment, of God.

Many benevolent persons feel, doubtless, very sensitively for the sad condition of the labouring classes, and are anxiously looking about for remedies to meet it. I would not speak slightly of any attempt in that direction. There are problems in political economy, in government, and, perhaps, even in the adaptation of machinery, which may be worked out with signal service to the great cause of suffering humanity. It is not my intention, however, to dwell upon such topics. My object is to show what can be done with the means that are at the present moment in everybody's power. Many a man, who is looking about for some specific, has in his hands the immediate means of doing great good, which he would be ready enough to employ, if he had but imagination to perceive that he possessed them. My endeavour then will simply be to show what can be done by the employers of labour in their individual and private capacity.

What an important relation is that of Master and Man! How it pervades the world; ascending from the lowest gradation of planter and slave through the states of master

and servant, landlord and labourer, manufacturer and artisan, till it comes to the higher degrees of rule which one cultivated man has to exercise over another in the performance of the greatest functions. See, throughout, what difficulties and temptations encumber this relation. How boundless is the field of thought which it opens to us, how infinite the duties which it contains, how complete an exercise it is for the whole faculties of man. Observe what wretchedness is caused by a misunderstanding of this relation in domestic matters. See the selfish carelessness about the happiness of those around them of men not ill-intentioned, nor unkind, perhaps, in their dealings with the world in general, but lamentably unfit for the management of a home. Then observe the effects of similar mismanagement in dealing with a country. Look at the listless loiterers about an Irish town; you would naturally say to yourself, "Surely this people have done all that there can be for them to do." You walk out of the town, and find the adjacent fields as listless-looking, and neglected, as the men themselves. Think what a want there must be of masters of labour, that those hands and these weeds are not brought into closer contact.

It may be said that the distressed condition of the labouring classes is owing to temporary causes, and that good times, by which is meant good wages, would remove a large part of the evil. I confess it does not appear to me that a good harvest or two, or ready customers on the other side of the Atlantic, or the home demand that may arise from exhausted stocks, or any other cause of that nature which is simply to end in better wages, would of itself do all, or even any considerable part, of what we should desire. I do not, for a moment, mean to depreciate the good effects

that would flow from an increase of employment and better wages. But still I imagine that there are many cases in which, if you were, in ordinary times, to double the amount of wages, a very inadequate proportion of good would follow. You have to teach these poor people how to spend money; you have to give them the opportunities of doing so to advantage; you have to provide a system of education which shall not vary with every fluctuation of trade; and to adopt such methods of working as shall make the least possible disturbance of domestic ties. No sudden influx of money will do all these things. In fact, whatever part of this subject one takes up, one is perpetually brought back to the conviction of the necessity which exists for an earnest and practical application, on the part of the employing class, of thought and labour for the welfare of those whom they employ.

Some of my readers may think that I have spoken of the distress of the labouring population in exaggerated terms. Let them only read the details of it in the Report of 1842, on the Sanitary Condition of the labouring population, or in the Report of 1843, on the condition of the children and young persons employed in mines and manufactures. I scarcely know what extracts to give of these direful reports, that may briefly convey the state of things to those who have not studied the subject. Shall I tell them of children ignorant who Jesus Christ was; or of others who know no more of the Lord's Prayer than the first words, "Our Father," and whose nightly prayers begin and end with those two words? Shall I tell them of great towns in which one half at least of the juvenile population is growing up without education of any kind whatever? Shall I show that working people are often permitted to pass their labour

time, the half of their lives, in mines, workshops, and manufactories, where an atmosphere of a deleterious kind prevails ; and this, too, not from any invincible evil in the nature of the employment, but from a careless or penurious neglect on the part of their employers? Shall I go into a lengthened description of the habitations of the poor which will show that they are often worse housed than beasts of burden? Or need I depict at large the dark stream of profligacy which overflows and burns into those parts of the land where such Want and Ignorance prevail?

How many of these evils might have been mitigated, if not fully removed, had each generation of masters done but a small part of its duty in the way of amelioration. But it was not of such things that they were thinking. The thoughtless cruelty in the world almost outweighs the rest.

"Why vex me with these things?" exclaims the general reader. "Have we not enough of dismal stories? It oppresses us to hear them. Let us hope that something will occur to prevent such things in future. But I am not a redresser of grievances. Let those who live by the manufacturing system cure the evils incident to it. Oh, that there had never been such a thing as a manufacturing system!" With thoughts vague, recriminatory, and despondent, as the foregoing, does many a man push from him all consideration on the subject. It is so easy to despair; and the largeness of a calamity is so ready a shelter for those who have not heart enough to adventure any opposition to it.

Thus, by dwelling upon the magnitude of the evils we long to lessen, we are frightened and soothed into letting our benevolent wishes remain as wishes only. But surely a man may find a sphere small enough, as well as large enough, for him to act in. In all other pursuits we are obliged to limit the number and extent of our objects, in



order to give full effect to our endeavours; and so it should be with benevolence. The foolish sluggard stares hopelessly into the intricacies of the forest, and thinks that it can never be reclaimed. The wiser man, the labourer, begins at his corner of the wood, and makes out a task for himself for each day. Let not our imaginations be employed on one side only. Think, that large as may appear the work to be done—so too the result of any endeavour, however small in itself, may be of infinite extent in the future. Nothing is lost.

And why should we despair? A great nation is never in extreme peril until it has lost its hopeful spirit. If, at this moment, a foreign enemy were on the point of invading us, how strenuous we should be: what moral energy would instantly pervade us. Faster than the beacon lights could give the intelligence from headland to headland; from city to city would spread the national enthusiasm of a people that would never admit the thought of being conquered. Trust me, these domestic evils are foes not less worthy of our attention than any foreign invaders. It seems to me, I must confess, a thing far more to be dreaded, that any considerable part of our population should be growing up in a state of absolute ignorance, than would be the danger, not new to us, of the combined hostility of the civilised world. Our trials, as a nation, like our individual ones, are perpetually varied as the world progresses.

“The old order changeth, yielding place to new,  
And God fulfils himself in many ways.”

We have not the same evils to contend with as our ancestors had; but we need the same stoutness of heart that bore them through the contest. The sudden growth

of things, excellent in themselves, entangles the feet of that generation amongst whom they spring up. There may be something, too, in the progress of human affairs like the coming in of the tide, which, for each succeeding wave, often seems as much of a retreat as an advance ; but still the tide comes on.

The settled state of things attendant upon peace, and an unquestioned dynasty, is good, as it enables men to look more to civil affairs ; but it has, perhaps, a drawback in a certain apathy which is wont to accompany it. The ordinary arrangements of social life, for a long time uninterrupted by any large calamity, appear to become hardened into certainties. A similar course of argument would, on a large scale, apply not only to this country, but to the world in general. Security is the chief end of civilisation, and as it progresses the fortunes of individuals are, upon the whole, made less liable to derangement. This very security may tend to make men careless of the welfare of others, and, as Bacon would express it, may be noted as an impediment to benevolence. I have often thought, whether in former times, when men looked to those immediately around them as their body-guard against sudden and violent attacks, they ventured to show as much ill-temper to those they lived with as you sometimes see them do now, when assistance of all kinds is a purchasable commodity. Considerations of this nature are particularly applicable when addressed to persons living in a great capital like London. All things that concern the nation, its joys, its sorrows, and its successes, are transacted in this metropolis ; or, as one might more properly say, are represented in transactions in this metropolis. But still this often happens in such a manner as would be imperceptible even to people of vast

experience and observation. The countless impulses which travel up from various directions to this absorbing centre sometimes neutralise each other, and leave a comparative calm ; or they create so complex an agitation that it may be next to impossible for us to discern and estimate the component forces. Hence the metropolis may not at times be sufficiently susceptible in the case either of manufacturing or agricultural distress, or of any colonial perturbation. This metropolitan insensibility has some great advantages, but it is well for us to observe the corresponding evil, and, as far as may be, to guard our own hearts from being rendered apathetic by its influence.

I do not seek to terrify any one into a care for the labouring classes, by representing the danger to society of neglecting them. It is certainly a fearful thing to think of large masses of men being in that state of want and misery which leaves them nothing to hazard ; and who are likely to be without the slightest reverence or love for the institutions around them. Still it is not to any fear, grounded on such considerations, that I would appeal. The flood-gates may be strong enough to keep out the torrent for our time. These things are not in our reckonings. Occasionally the upheaving of the waves may frighten timid, selfish men into concessions which they would not otherwise have made ; but those whom I would seek to influence are likely to court danger and difficulty rather than to shun it. Nor would I even care to disturb the purely selfish man by dwelling studiously on any social dangers around us, or labouring to discern in present disturbance or distress the seeds of inevitable revolution. No, I would say to him, if it all ends here,

“ But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,”

you may have chosen wisely. It is true there are sources of

happiness which you now know nothing of, and which may be far beyond any selfish gratification you have ever experienced. Indeed, it may be, that you cannot enjoy the highest delights without sharing them, that they are not things to be given out to each of us as individuals, now to this man, then to that, but that they require a community of love. But, at any rate, I do not wish to scare you into active and useful exertion by indicating that you are, otherwise, in danger of losing any of the good things of this world.

The great motive to appeal to is not a man's apprehension of personal loss or suffering, but his fear of neglecting a sacred duty. And it will be found here, I believe, as elsewhere, that the highest motives are those of the most sustained efficiency.

But little as I would counsel despair, or encourage apathy, or seek to influence by terror, it is not that I look to the "course of events," or any other rounded collection of words, to do anything for us. What is this "course of events" but the continuity of human endeavour? And giving all due weight to the influence of those general currents which attend the progress of opinions and institutions, we must still allow largely for the effect of individual character, and individual exertions. The main direction that the stream will take is manifest enough perhaps; but it may come down upon long tracts of level ground which it will overspread quietly, or it may enter into some rocky channel which will control it; or it may meet with some ineffectual mud embankment which it will overthrow with devastation.

Putting aside then such phrases as "course of events," and the like, let us look to men. And whom shall we look to first but the Masters of Thought? Surely the true poet

will do something to lift the burden of his own age. What is the use of wondrous gifts of language, if they are employed to enervate, and not to ennoble, their hearers? What avails it to trim the lights of history, if they are made to throw no brightness on the present, or open no track into the future? And to employ Imagination only in the service of Vanity, or Gain, is as if an astronomer were to use his telescope to magnify the pot-herbs in his kitchen garden.

Think what a glorious power is that of expression; and what responsibility follows the man who possesses it. That grace of language which can make even commonplace things beautiful, throwing robes of the poorest texture into forms of all-attractive loveliness; why does it not expend its genius on materials that would be worthy of the artist? The great interests of Man are before it, are crying for it, can absorb all its endeavour, are, indeed, the noblest field for it. Think of this—then think what a waste of high intellectual endowments there has been in all ages from the meanest of motives. But what wise man would not rather have the harmless fame which youths, on a holiday, scratch for themselves upon the leaden roof of some cathedral tower, than enjoy the undeniable renown of those who, with whatever power, have written from slight or unworthy motives what may prove a hindrance, rather than an aid, to the well-being of their fellow-men?

But, passing from those who are often the real, though unrecognised, rulers of their own age, and the despots of the succeeding generation, let us turn to the ostensible and immediate ruling powers. Assuredly the government may do something towards removing part of the evils we have been considering as connected with the system of labour. It seems as if there were a want of more departments; and

certainly of many more able men. The progress of any social improvement appears to depend too much on chance and clamour. I do not suppose, for a moment, that we can have the cut-and-dried executive, or legislative, arrangements that belong to despotic governments; and it is, in some respects, a wholesome fear that we have of the interference of government. Still, we may recollect that England is not a small state, nor an inactive one, where the public energies are likely to be deadened, or over-ridden, by activity on the part of the government, which might, perhaps, with much safety undertake more than it has been wont to do. One thing is certain, that it may do great good, if it would but look out for men of ability to fill the offices in its gift. No government need fear such a course as destructive to its party interests. In appointing and promoting the fittest men, you are likely to ensure more gratitude than if you selected those who, being the creatures of your kindness, could never, you imagine, be otherwise than most grateful for it. Weak people are seldom much given to gratitude: and even if they were, it is dearly that you purchase their allegiance; for there are few things which, on the long run, displease the public more than bad appointments. But, putting aside the political expediency either way, it is really a sacred duty in a statesman to choose fit agents. Observe the whirlpool of folly that a weak man contrives to create round him; and see, on the other hand, with what small means a wise man manages to have influence and respect, and force, in whatever may be his sphere.

There is a matter connected with the functions of government which seems to be worthy of notice; and that is, the distribution of honours. These honours are part of the resources of the state; and it is a most spendthrift thing to

bestow them as they frequently are bestowed. It is not merely that government gives them unworthily; it absolutely plays with them; gives them, as one might say, for the drollery of the thing, when it adds a title to some foolish person, whose merits not even the Public Orator at a university could discover. It is idle to talk of such things being customary. A great minister would not recommend his sovereign to confer honours on such people; and sensible men would be glad to see that the resources of the state, in all ways, were dealt with considerately.

The above reflections are not foreign to the main subject of this essay; for a government, having at heart the improvement of the labouring population, or any other social matter, might direct the stream of honours towards those who were of service to the state in this matter, and so might make the civic crown what it was in ancient days. Not, however, that I mean to say that the best men are to be swayed by these baubles. The hope of reward is not the source of the highest endeavour.

There is a class of persons who interest themselves so far in the condition of the labouring population as to bring forward sad instances of suffering, and then to say, "Our rich men should look to these things." This kind of benevolence delights to bring together, in startling contrast, the condition of different classes, and then to indulge in much moral reflection. Now riches are very potent in their way; but a great heart is often more wanted than a full purse. I speak it not in any disparagement of the rich or great when I say that we must not trust to them alone. Amongst them are many who use their riches as God's stewards; but the evils which we have to contend against are to be met by a general impulse in the right direction of

people of all classes. There are instances where a man's wealth enables him to set forth more distinctly to the world's eye some work of benevolence, even to be the pioneer in improvements, which persons of smaller fortunes could scarcely have effected. In such a case great indeed is the advantage of riches. But do not let us accustom our minds to throw the burden of good works on the shoulders of any particular class. God has not given a monopoly of benevolence to the rich.

What I have just said about individual rich men applies in some measure to associations for benevolent purposes. They are to be looked upon as accessories—often very useful ones—but they are not to be expected to supersede private enterprise. A man should neither wait for them; nor, when they exist, should he try to throw his duties upon them, and indolently expect that they are to think and act in all cases for him. Wherever a strong feeling on any subject exists, societies will spring up in connection with it; and we cannot but be pleased that it is so. What such bodies have to do is to direct their energies to those parts of the matter in which it is especially difficult for private enterprise to succeed. And private individuals should be cautious of slackening their endeavours in any good cause, merely because they are aware that some society exists which has the same object in view.

I come now to some member of that large class of persons who are not rich, nor great employers of labour, nor in any station of peculiar influence. He shudders as he reads those startling instances of suffering or crime in which the distress and ignorance of the labouring population will, occasionally, break out into the notice of the world. "What can I do?" he exclaims. "I feel with intensity the



horrors I read of; but what can one man do?" I only ask him to study what he feels. He is a citizen. He cannot be such an isolated being as to have no influence. The conclusions which he comes to, after mature reflection, will not be without their weight. If individual citizens were anxious to form their opinions with care, on those questions respecting which they will have to vote and to act, there would be little need of organised bodies of men to carry great measures into effect. The main current of public opinion is made up of innumerable rills, so small, perhaps, that a child might with its foot divert the course of any one of them; but collected together they rush down with a force that is irresistible. If those who have actively to distribute the labour of the world knew that you, the great mass of private men, regarded them not for their money, but for their conduct to those in their employ, not for the portion which they may contrive to get for themselves, but for the well-being which they may give rise to, and regulate, amongst others; why then your thoughts would be motives to them, urging them on in the right path. Besides, you would not stop at thinking. The man who gives time and thought to the welfare of others will seldom be found to grudge them anything else.

Again, have not you, though not manufacturers, or master-workmen, or owners of land, have not you dependents, in whose behalf you may find exercise for the principles to which I am convinced that study in this matter will lead you? Your regard for servants is a case in point. And, moreover, you may show in your ordinary, every-day dealings with the employers of labour a considerateness for those under them which may awaken the employers to a more lively care themselves. Only reflect on the duty:

opportunities of testing the strength of your resolves will not be wanting.

We sometimes feel thoroughly impressed by some good thought, or just example, that we meet with in study or real life, but as if we had no means of applying it. We cannot at once shape for ourselves a course that shall embrace this newly-acquired wisdom. Often it seems too grand for the occasions of ordinary life; and we fear that we must keep it laid up for some eventful day, as nice housewives their stateliest furniture. However, if we keep it close to the heart, and make but the least beginning with it, our infant practice leads to something better, or grows into something ampler. In real life there are no isolated points.

You, who have but one or two dependents, or, perhaps, but one drudge dependent upon you, whether as servant, apprentice, or hired labourer, do not think that you have not an ample opportunity for exercising the duties of an employer of labour. Do not suppose that these duties belong to the great manufacturer with the population of a small town in his own factory, or to the landlord with vast territorial possessions, and that you have nothing to do with them. The Searcher of all hearts may make as ample a trial of you in your conduct to one poor dependent, as of the man who is appointed to lead armies and administer provinces. Nay, your treatment of some animal entrusted to your care may be a history as significant for you as the chronicles of kings for them. The moral experiments in the world may be tried with the smallest quantities.

I cannot quit this part of the subject without alluding more directly to the duties of the employers of domestic servants. Of course the principles which should regulate the conduct of masters and mistresses towards their servants,

are the same as those which should regulate the employers of labour generally. But there are some peculiar circumstances which need to be noticed in the application of these principles. That, in this case, the employers and the employed are members of one family, is a circumstance which intensifies the relation. It is a sad thing for a man to pass the working part of his day with an exacting, unkind master; but still, if the workman returns at evening to a home that is his own, there is a sense of coming joy and freedom which may support him throughout the weary hours of labour. But think what it must be to share one's home with one's oppressor; to have no recurring time when one is certain to be free from those harsh words, and unjust censures, which are almost more than blows, ay, even to those natures we are apt to fancy so hardened to rebuke. Imagine the deadness of heart that must prevail in that poor wretch who never hears the sweet words of praise or of encouragement. Many masters of families, men living in the rapid current of the world, who are subject to a variety of impressions which, in their busy minds, are made and effaced even in the course of a single day, can with difficulty estimate the force of unkind words upon those whose monotonous life leaves few opportunities of effacing any unwelcome impression. There is nothing in which the aid of imagination, that handmaid of charity, may be more advantageously employed, than in considering the condition of domestic servants. Let a man endeavour to realise it to himself, let him think of its narrow sphere, of its unvarying nature, and he will be careful not to throw in, unnecessarily, the trouble even of a single harsh word, which may make so large a disturbance in the shallow current of a domestic's hopes and joys. How often, on the contrary, do you find that masters seem to have no apprehension of the feelings

of those under them, no idea of any duties on their side beyond "cash payment," whereas the good, old, patriarchal feeling towards your household is one which the mere introduction of money wages has not by any means superseded, and which cannot, in fact, be superseded. You would bear with lenity from a child many things, for which, in a servant, you can find nothing but the harshest names. Yet how often are these poor, uneducated creatures little better than children! You talk, too, of ingratitude from them, when, if you reflected a little, you would see that they do not understand your benefits. It is hard enough sometimes to make benefits sink into men's hearts, even when your good offices are illustrated by much kindness of words and manner; but to expect that servants should at once appreciate your care for them is surely most unreasonable, especially if it is not accompanied by a manifest regard and sympathy. You would not expect it, if you saw the child-like relation in which they stand to you.

Another mode of viewing with charity the conduct of domestic servants, is to imagine what manner of servant you would make yourself, or any one of those whom in your own rank you esteem and love. Do you not perceive, in almost every character, some element which would occasionally make its possessor fail in performing the duties of domestic service? Do you find that faithfulness, accuracy, diligence, and truth pervade the circle of your equals in such abundance that you should be exorbitantly angry the moment you perceive a deficiency in such qualities amongst those who have been but indifferently brought up, and who, perhaps, have early imbibed those vices of their class, fear and falsehood; vices which their employers can only hope to eradicate by a long course of considerate kindness.

I do not speak of the conduct of masters and mistresses as an easy matter ; on the contrary, I believe that it is one of the most difficult functions in life. If, however, men only saw the difficulty, they would see the worthiness of trying to overcome it. You observe a man becoming day by day richer, or advancing in station, or increasing in professional reputation, and you set him down as a successful man in life. But, if his home is an ill-regulated one, where no links of affection extend throughout the family, whose former domestics (and he has had more of them than he can well remember) look back upon their sojourn with him as one unblessed by kind words or deeds, I contend that that man has not been successful. Whatever good fortune he may have in the world, it is to be remembered that he has always left one important fortress untaken behind him. That man's life does not surely read well whose benevolence has found no central home. It may have sent forth rays in various directions, but there should have been a warm focus of love—that home nest which is formed round a good man's heart.

Having spoken of some of the duties of private persons, we come now to the great employers of labour. Would that they all saw the greatness of their position. Strange as it may sound, they are the successors of the feudal barons, they it is who lead thousands to peaceful conquests, and upon whom, in great measure, depends the happiness of large masses of mankind. As Mr. Carlyle says, "The Leaders of Industry, if Industry is ever to be led, are virtually the Captains of the World ; if there be no nobleness in them, there will never be an Aristocracy more." Can a man, who has this destiny entrusted to him, imagine that his vocation consists merely in getting together a large

lump of gold, and then being off with it, to enjoy it, as he fancies, in some other place ; as if that, which is but a small part of his business in life, were all in all to him ; as if, indeed, the parable of the talents were to be taken literally, and that a man should think that he has done his part when he has made much gold and silver out of little ? If these men saw their position rightly, what would be their objects, what their pleasures ? Their objects would not consist in foolish vyings with each other about the grandeur or the glitter of life. But, in directing the employment of labour, they would find room for the exercise of all the powers of their minds, of their best affections, and of whatever was worthy in their ambition. Their occupation, so far from being a limited sphere of action, is one which may give scope to minds of the most various capacity. While one man may undertake those obvious labours of benevolent superintendence which are of immediate and pressing necessity, another may devote himself to more remote and indirect methods of improving the condition of those about him, which are often not the less valuable because of their indirectness. In short, it is evident that to lead the labour of large masses of people, and to do that, not merely with a view to the greatest product of commodities, but to the best interests of the producers, is a matter which will sufficiently and worthily occupy men of the strongest minds aided by all the attainments which cultivation can bestow.

I do not wish to assert a principle larger than the occasion demands ; and I am, therefore, unwilling to declare that we cannot justly enter into a relation so meagre with our fellow-creatures, as that of employing all their labour, and giving them nothing but money in return. There might, perhaps, be a state of society in which such a relation would not be culpable, a state in which the great mass of the

employed were cultivated and considerate men; and where the common interests of master and man were well understood. But we have not to deal with any such imaginary case. So far from working men being the considerate creatures we have just imagined them, it is absolutely requisite to protect, in the most stringent manner, the interests of the children against the parents, who are often anxious to employ their little ones most immaturely. Nay, more—it is notorious that working men will frequently omit to take even the slightest precaution in matters connected with the preservation of their own lives. If these poor men do not demand from you as Christians something more than mere money wages, what do the injunctions about charity mean? If those employed by you are not your neighbours, who are?

But some great employer may exclaim: "It is hard that we, the agents between the consumer and the producer, should have all the sacrifices to make, should have all the labouring population thrown, as it were, on our hands." In reply, I say that I have laid down no such doctrine. I have urged the consumer to perform his duties, and tried to point out to him what some of those duties are. As a citizen he may employ himself in understanding this subject, and in directing others rightly; he may, in his capacity of voter, or in his fair influence on voters, urge upon the state its duty, and show, that as an individual, he would gladly bear his share of any increased burdens which that duty might entail upon the state. He may prove in many ways, as a mere purchaser, his concern for the interests of the producer. And there are, doubtless, occasions on which you, the great employers of labour, may call upon him to make large sacrifices of his money, his

time, and his thoughts, for the welfare of the labouring classes. His example and his encouragement may cheer you on; and as a citizen, as an instructor, as a neighbour, in all the capacities of life, he may act and speak in a way that may indirectly, if not directly, support your more manifest endeavours in the same good cause. It is to no one class that I speak. We are all bound to do something towards this good work. If, hereafter, I go more into detail as regards the especial methods of improving his work-people that a manufacturer might employ, it is not that I wish to point out manufacturers as a class especially deficient in right feelings towards those under them. Far from it. Much of what I shall venture to suggest has been learnt from what I have seen, and heard, amongst the manufacturers themselves.

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## CHAPTER II.

### SOCIAL GOVERNMENT.

SUPPOSING, reader, that whether you are manufacturer, master-workman, owner of land, or private individual, you are now thoroughly impressed with the duty of attending to the welfare of your dependents; I proceed to make some general reflections which may aid you in your outset, or sustain you in the progress, of your endeavours.

And, first, let me implore you not to delay that outset. Make a beginning at once, at least in investigating the matters to which I have striven to draw your attention. It is no curious work of art that you have to take up; it



requires no nicety of apprehension; you can hardly begin wrongly, I do not say in action, but in the preparation for action. However little of each day you may be able to call your own for this purpose, it is better to begin with that little than to wait for some signal time of leisure. Routine encumbers us; our days are frittered away by most minute employments that we cannot control; and, when spare moments do occur, we are mostly unprepared with any pursuits of our own to go on with. Hence it is, that the most obvious evils go on, generation after generation, people not having time, as they would say, to interfere. Men are for ever putting off the concerns which should be dearest to them to a "more convenient season," when, as they hope, there may be fewer trifles to distract their attention: but a great work, which is to commence in the heart, requires not to have the first stone laid for it, with pomp, upon some holiday. It is good to have made a beginning upon it at any time.

The wisdom, or the folly, of delay is in most instances like that of a traveller coming to a stream, and wishing to ford it, yet continuing his journey along its banks: and whether this is wise, or not, depends mainly on the simple fact of whether he is walking up to the source, or down to the fall. The latter is apt to be the direction in the case of our generous resolves: their difficulty widens as we delay to act upon them.

Throughout the progress of your work, there is nothing that you will have more frequently to be mindful of than your views with respect to self-advancement. To take one form of it, the acquisition of money. Money, as Charles Lamb, a great despiser of cant, observed, is not dross, but books, pictures, wines, and many pleasant things. Still I

suspect that money is more sought after to gratify vanity, than to possess the means of enjoying any of the above-named pleasant things. Money is so much desired, because it is a measure of success; so much regretted, because we fancy the loss of it leaves us powerless and contemptible. That kind of satire, therefore, which delights to dwell upon the general subserviency to wealth is not likely to make men less desirous of riches. But a man would be likely to estimate more reasonably the possession of money and of all kinds of self-advancement, if he did but perceive that even a man's worldly success is not to be measured by his success for himself alone, but by the result of his endeavours for the great family of man.

There is a source of contemplation which Nature affords us, one, too, that is open to the dweller in crowded cities as well as to the shepherd on Salisbury plain, and which might sometimes suggest the foolishness of an inordinate love of money. Consider the prospect which each unveiled night affords us, telling of wonders such as we have hardly the units of measurement to estimate; and then think how strange it is that we should ever allow our petty personal possessions of to-day to render us blind to the duties which, alone, are the great realities of life. There was some excuse, perhaps, for the men of olden time, who looked upon this earth, the birthplace of their gods, as no mean territory. That they should dote upon terrestrial things was not to be wondered at. But what is to be said for us who know that this small planet is but a speck, as it were, from which we look out upon the profusion of immensity. To think that a man, who knows this, should nevertheless not hesitate to soil his soul, lying here, cringing there, pursuing tortuous schemes of most corrupt policy; or that he should ever suffer himself to be immersed, innocently, if

it may be so, in selfish, worldly pursuits, forgetful of all else ; when, at the best, it is but to win some acres of this transitory earth, or to be noted as one who has been successful for himself. The folly of the gambling savage who stakes his liberty against a handful of cowrie shells is nothing to it.

Perhaps the next thing that is likely to divert you from useful endeavours for the benefit of others is fear of criticism: you do not know what the world will say; indeed, they may pronounce you an enthusiast, which word, of itself, is an icy blast of ridicule to a timid mind. You shudder at doing anything unusual, and even hear by anticipation the laugh of your particular friends. You are especially ashamed at appearing to care for what those about you do not care for. A laugh at your humanity, or your "theories," would disconcert you. You are fearfully anxious that any project of benevolence you undertake should succeed, not altogether on its own account, but because your sagacity is embarked in it, and plentiful will be the gibes at its failure, if it should fail. Put these fears aside. All that is prominent, all that acts, must lay itself open to shallow criticism. It has been said that in no case of old age, however extreme, has the faculty for giving advice been known to decay; depend upon it, that of criticism flourishes in the most indolent, the most feeble, the most doting minds. Let not the wheels of your endeavour be stayed by accumulated rubbish of this kind. We are afraid of responsibility, afraid of what people may say of us, afraid of being alone in doing right; in short, the courage which is allied to no passion—Christian courage, as it may be called—is in all ages and amongst all people one of the rarest possessions.

The fear of ridicule is the effeminacy of the soul.

Great enterprises—and for you this attempt to make your working men happier is a great enterprise—great enterprises demand an habitual self-sacrifice in little things ; and, hard as it may be to keep fully in mind the enterprise itself, it is often harder still to maintain a just sense of the connection between it and these said trifling points of conduct, which, perhaps, in any single instance, seem so slightly and so remotely connected with it. But remember it is not always over great impediments that men are liable to stumble most fatally.

You must not expect immediate and obvious gratitude to crown your exertions. The benevolence that has not duty for its stem, but merely springs from some affectionateness of nature, must often languish, I fear, when it comes to count up its returns in the way of grateful affection from those whom it has toiled for. And yet the fault is often as much in the impatience and unreasonable expectation of the benefactors, as in any ingratitude on the part of the persons benefited. If you must look for gratitude, at any rate consider whether your exertions are likely to be fully understood at present by those whom you have served ; and whether it is not a reversion, rather than an immediate return, that you should look for—a reversion, too, in many cases to be realised only on the death of the benefactor. Moreover, it is useless and unreasonable to expect that any motives of gratitude will uniformly modify for you the peculiar tempers and dispositions of those whom you have served. Your benefits did not represent a permanent state of mind ; neither will their gratitude. The sense of obligation, even in most faithful hearts, is often

dormant; but evil tempers answer quickly to the lightest summons.

In all your projects for the good of others, beware lest your benevolence should have too much of a spirit of interference. Consider what it is you want to produce. Not an outward, passive, conformity to your wishes, but something vital which shall generate the feelings and habits you long to see manifested. You can clip a tree into any form you please, but if you wish it to bear fruit when it has been barren you must attend to what is beneath the surface, you must feed the roots. You must furnish it with that nutriment, you must supply it with those opportunities of sunshine, which will enable it to use its own energies. See how the general course of the world is governed. How slowly are those great improvements matured which our impatient nature might expect to have been effected at a single stroke. What tyrannies have been under the sun, things which we can hardly read of without longing for some direct divine interference to have taken place. Indeed, if other testimony were wanting, the cruelties permitted on earth present an awful idea of the general freedom of action entrusted to mankind. And can you think that it is left for you to drill men suddenly into your notions, or to produce moral ends by mere mechanical means? You will avoid much of this foolish spirit if you are really unselfish in your purposes; if, in dealing with those whom you would benefit, you refer your operations to them as the centre, and not to yourself, and the success of your plans. There is a noble passage in the history of the first great Douglas, the "good Lord James," who, just before the battle of Bannockburn, seeing Randolph, his rival in arms, with a small body of men, contending against

a much superior English force, rushed to his aid. "The little body of Randolph," says Sir Walter Scott, "was seen emerging like a rock in the waves, from which the English cavalry were retreating on every side with broken ranks, like a repelled tide. 'Hold and halt!' said the Douglas to his followers; 'we are come too late to aid them; let us not lessen the victory they have won by affecting to claim a share in it.'" It is the self-denying nature of this chivalrous deed that I would apply to far other circumstances. The interfering spirit, which I deprecate, would come, not to consummate the victory, but to hinder it.

For similar reasons I would have you take care that you do not adopt mere rules, and seek to impress them rigidly upon others, as if they were general principles, which must at once be suitable to all mankind. Do not imagine that your individual threads of experience form a woven garment of prudence, capable of fitting with exactness any member of the whole human family.

There are several ungenerous motives, of some subtlety, which hide in the dark corners of the heart, and stand in the way of benevolence. For instance, even in good minds, there is apt to lurk some tinge of fear, or of dislike, at the prospect of an undoubted amelioration of the lot of others coming too fast, as these good people would say. Indeed, some persons find it hard to reconcile themselves to the idea of others' burdens being readily removed, even when they themselves are making exertions to remove them.

Another feeling to beware of is that of envy, which, strange as it seems, may sometimes arise upon the view of that very prosperity which the person, feeling envy, has helped to create. The truth is, it is comparatively easy to avoid being envious of the good fortune which was

established before our time, or which is out of our own sphere ; but to be quite pleased with the good fortune of those whom we recollect in other circumstances, and who, perhaps, have been accustomed to ask advice or assistance from us—that is the trial.

Another ungenerous sentiment, similar to the foregoing, and likely at times to prove a hindrance to benevolent exertion, arises from the comparison of our own past lot with that of the persons whose condition is sought to be improved. Most of us have a little tendency to grudge them this amelioration. We should shudder at the brutality of one, who, having attained to power, is more cruel because he has suffered much himself (*"eo immitior quia toleraverat"*) ; but are we not of a like spirit, if any dissatisfaction steals over our minds at seeing others exempt from those sufferings, which in our own career fell heavily upon us ? It is difficult to dislodge this kind of selfishness from the heart. Indeed, there can hardly be a surer symptom of sound benevolence in a man than his taking pleasure in those paths being smoothened which he will never have to traverse again : I do not say in making them smoother—it is much easier to reconcile himself to that—but in their being made so without his interference.

It would be well, indeed, if selfishness came into play on those occasions only where self is really concerned.

There is nothing which a wise employer will have more at heart than to gain the confidence of those under him. The essential requisites on his part are truth and kindness. These qualities may, however, belong in a high degree to persons who fail to gain the confidence of their dependents. In domestic life confidence may be prevented by fits of capricious passion on the part of the ruling powers ; and a

man who, in all important matters, acts justly and kindly towards his family, may be deprived of their confidence by his weakness of temper in little things. For instance, you meet with persons who fall into a violent way of talking about all that offends them in their dependents; and who express themselves with as much anger about trivial in-advertencies as about serious moral offences. In the course of the same day that they have given way to some outbreak of temper they may act with great self-denial and watchful kindness; but they can hardly expect their subordinates to be at ease with them. Another defect which prevents confidence is a certain sterility of character, which does not allow of sympathy with other people's fancies and pursuits. A man of this character does not understand any likings but his own. He will be kind to you, if you will be happy in his way; but he has nothing but ridicule or coldness for anything which does not suit him. This imperfection of sympathy, which prevents an equal from becoming a friend, may easily make a superior into a despot. Indeed, I almost doubt whether the head of a family does not do more mischief if he is unsympathetic than even if he were unjust. The triumph of domestic rule is for the master's presence not to be felt as a restraint.

In a larger sphere than the domestic one, such as amongst the employers of labour and their men, the same elements are required on the part of the masters to produce confidence. Much frankness also and decisiveness are required. The more uneducated people are, the more suspicious they are likely to be; and the best way of meeting their suspiciousness is to have as few concealments as possible; for instance, not to omit stating any motives relating to your own interest as master, which may influence your conduct towards your men.



There is a class of persons brought into contact with the employers of labour and their men who might often do good service to both, by endeavouring, when it is deserved, to inspire the men with confidence in the kindly intentions of their masters. This is a duty which belongs to the clergy and professional men in manufacturing towns. There are many things which a man cannot say for himself; and, as Bacon has observed, it is one of the advantages of friendship that it provides some person to say these things for one. So, in this case, it must often have a very good effect, when a bystander, as it were, explains to the men the kind wishes and endeavours of a master manufacturer, which explanation would come with much less force and grace from the master himself.

I come now to a subject bordering on the former, namely, the political confidence of the operatives. I am afraid that, at present, there is a great distrust amongst them of public men. This is not to be wondered at. Their distrust is much fostered by the practice of imputing bad motives, and calling ill names, so much the fashion in political writing of all kinds. It is not a vice peculiar to this age: indeed, I question whether political writing has ever, upon the whole, been more well-bred and considerate than it is now. But at all times the abusive style is the easiest mode of writing, and the surest of sympathy. The skill to make, and that to cure, a wound are different things; but the former is the one which belongs to most people, and often attracts most attention and encouragement. This, then, is one cause of the distrust of the working classes, which will only be mitigated by a higher tone of moral feeling on the part of the people generally. Another cause is to be found in the unwise, if not dishonest, conduct of

public men. Look at the mode of proceeding at elections. I put aside bribery, intimidation, and the like, the wrongfulness of which I hope we are all agreed upon; and I come to the intellectual part of the business. Extreme opinions are put forth by the candidates, often in violent and injurious language. Each strives to keep studiously in the background any points of difference between himself and the electing body. Electors are not treated as rational beings; their prejudices and their antipathies are petted as if they belonged to some despot whom it was treason to contradict. Whereas, if ever there is a time in his life when a man should weigh his words well, and when he should gird himself up to speak with truth and courage, it is when he is soliciting the suffrages of an electoral body. That is the way to anticipate inconsistency; the crime of which is more often in the hastiness of the first-formed opinion, than in the change from it. What is called the inconsistency may be the redeeming part of the transaction. The candidate is naturally tempted to fall in with the exact opinions that are likely to ensure success, and to express them without modification—in fact, for the sake of his present purpose, to leave as little room for the exercise of his discretion as possible. It is easy for him to make unconditional assertions when nothing is to be done upon them, but it is another thing when he has to bring them into action. The direction which he may wish to give to public affairs is likely to be met by many other impulses; and then he may have to remain consistent and useless, or to link himself to some friendly impulse which brings him, however, into opposition to some of his former broad and careless declarations. He has left himself no room for using his judgment. Indeed, one does not see very clearly why he takes his seat amongst men who are met to

deliberate. The evils that must arise from rash promises at elections are so great, that it is fortunate when the topics mooted on those occasions form but a small part of those which ultimately come under the consideration of the person elected; and, as often happens, that important public matters come to be discussed, which were not seen on the political horizon at the election time.

In addition to the distrust of individual legislators, which is, probably, frequent amongst the poorer classes, there is also, I suspect, a great distrust amongst them of the leading parties in the state. They perceive the evils of party, and see nothing on the other side. The meaning and intent of party, the way in which by its means social good is often worked out in a manner less harsh and abrupt, perhaps, than by any other means that has hitherto been devised, are considerations probably unknown to them. To address them upon such matters would be thought absurd. It would be said, that philosophical disquisitions on government are for the closet of the studious man, but not for common people coming to perform a plain, practical duty. Great principles, however, are at the foundation of all good action. Look to the divine teaching. See how the highest things are addressed to all classes. There is no esoteric philosophy there—one thing to the initiated, and another to the outer populace. And so I am persuaded in addressing the great masses of mankind on other subjects, you can hardly be too profound, if you contrive to express yourself without pedantry; you can hardly put motives of too much generosity before them, if you do so with complete sincerity and earnestness. All this is very difficult, but what social remedies are not? They are things to be toiled and bled for; and what is far more, you must run the risk of ridicule, endure want of sympathy, have the courage to

utter unpalatable truths, and not unfrequently resist the temptation of saying such things as are sure to elicit immediate and hearty approbation. When a statesman has a craving for present applause, it is an evil spirit always by his side, but which springs up to its utmost height, and overshadows him with its most baneful influence, at some of the most critical periods of his career.

But, in addition to the want of confidence in public men caused by malicious writing, or by their injudicious or dishonest conduct as candidates, or by the ignorance amongst the operatives of the good uses of party; is there not also a just want of confidence arising from the mode in which party warfare has sometimes been carried on in the legislative body? Remember that it is possible to intrigue with "interests," as we call them, as well as with private persons. The nice morality which would shudder at the revelations of petty intrigue disclosed by the diary of a Bubb Doddington, may urge on, and ride triumphantly, some popular cry, the justice of which it has never paused to examine. There are also such things as a factious opposition to the Government, a selfish desertion from it, or a slavish obedience to it; which things, the people in general are not slow to note, and often prone to attribute, even when there is no sufficient cause for attributing them. But of all the things which tend to separate the operatives from the governing classes, is the suspicion (oh, that we could say that it was altogether an unjust one!) that laws are framed, or maintained, which benefit those classes at the expense of their poorer brethren. We think it a marvellous act of malversation in a trustee, to benefit himself unjustly out of the funds entrusted to his care. Wrongs of this kind may appear to be diluted when the national prosperity is the trust-fund, and the legislative body is the

trustee. The largeness, however, of the transaction, does not diminish the injustice of it, although it may soothe the conscience, or partially excuse the conduct, of any individual member of the governing class. By governing class, I do not merely mean the legislative bodies, but I include the electing body, who are of course equally guilty when they clamour for what they deem their own peculiar interest, instead of calling for just laws. And they may be sure, that when once the great mass of the people are persuaded that the injustice which I have spoken of, is a ruling principle in any government; that government, if it lives, is henceforth based upon fear, and not upon affection.

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I shall now put down a few points of practice, which, though they are classed together, have no other link than that they all relate to our conduct in a family and towards dependents.

In social government, no less than in legislating for a state, there should be constant reference to great principles, if only from the exceeding difficulty of foreseeing, or appreciating, the results in detail of any measure.

It is a foolish thing when a man so guides himself that it is generally supposed in his family, and among his dependents, that no arguments of theirs are likely to persuade him to alter his views. Such a one may fancy that what he calls his firmness is the mainstay of his authority: but the obstinacy, which never listens, is not less fatal than the facility which never listens but to yield. If your rule has the reputation of not being amenable to reason, it is liable to sudden convulsions and headstrong distempers, or

to unreasonable cringings in which your welfare, and that of those whom you rule, are sacrificed to the apprehension of provoking your self-will. Moreover, the fear of irrational opposition on your part, often tempts those about you into taking up courses, which, otherwise, they might have thrown aside upon reflection, or after reasonable converse with you on the subject. You may have, in the end, to oppose yourself sternly to the wishes of those whom you would guide wisely ; but at any rate give yourself the chance of having, in the first instance, the full effect of any forces in their own minds which may be on your side. You cannot expect to have these useful allies, if your wont is to be blindly obstinate, and to carry things, on all occasions, by heavy-handed authority. The way in which expected opposition acts in determining the mind, is not always by creating immediate wilfulness : but a man, knowing that there is sure to be objection made, in any particular quarter, to his taking a course, respecting which he has not made up his own mind, sets to work to put aside that contingent obstacle to his freedom of action. In doing this, however, he generates, as it were, a force in the opposite direction ; in arguing against contingent opposition, he is led to make assertions which he is ashamed to draw back from ; and so, in the end, he fails to exercise an unbiassed judgment. I have gone minutely into this matter ; but it cannot be unimportant for those who rule, to consider well the latent sources of human motive.

In addressing persons of inferior station, do not be prone to suppose that there is much occasion for intellectual condescension on your part : at any rate do not be careless in what you say, as if anything would do for them. Observe the almost infinite fleetness of your own powers of

thought, and then consider whether it is likely that education has much to do with this. Use simple language, but do not fear to put substance in it : choose, if you like, common materials, but make the best structure that you can of them : and be assured that method and logical order are not thrown away upon any one. The rudest audience, as well as the most refined, soon grows weary, I suspect, of protracted, driftless tautology.

Do not dwell more than you can help upon the differences of nature between yourself and those with whom you live. Consider whether your own vanity is not too requiring. See that others have not the same complaint to make of your uncongeniality, that you are, perhaps, prone to make of theirs. If you are, indeed, superior, reckon it as your constant duty to try and sympathise with those beneath you ; to mix with their pursuits, as far as you can, and thus, insensibly, to elevate them. Perhaps there is no mind that will not yield some return for your labour : it seems the dullest, bleakest rock, not earth enough to feed a nettle ; yet up grows, with culture, the majestic pine.

A want of sympathy leads to the greatest ignorance in the intellect as well as in the heart.

Remember that your dependents have seldom a full power of replying to you ; and let the recollection of that make you especially considerate in your dealings with them.

When you find a lack of truth in those about you, consider whether it may not arise from the furiousness of your own temper which scares truth away from you ; and reflect how fearful a part the angry man may have in the sin of those falsehoods which immoderate fear of him gives rise to.

Such, I am afraid, is the tyrannous nature of the human heart that we not only show, but really feel, more anger at offence given us by those under our power, than at any other cause whatever.

It is a mistake to suppose that we necessarily become indifferent to the faults and foibles of those with whom we live : on the contrary, we sometimes grow more and more alive to them ; they seem, as it were, to create a corresponding soreness in ourselves ; and, knowing that they exist in the character, we are apt to fancy that we perceive them even on occasions when they are not in the least brought into play.

Do not be fond of the display of authority, or think that there is anything grand in being obeyed with abject fear. One certainly meets with persons who are vain of their ill-temper, and of seeing how it keeps the people about them in order ; a species of vanity which they might share with any wild animal at large.

In reasoning with your dependents, do not allow yourself to make broad assertions and careless conclusions, merely because you are addressing inferiors. "The Courts of Reason recognise no difference of persons." And when you wish to disabuse the minds of those entrusted to your guidance of anything which you are convinced is erroneous, do not attempt to do so by unmeasured condemnation. It is seldom that a secure answer is given to any theory, or system, except by one who exhausts, and lays before you, the good in it.

Let not your forgiveness be of that kind which may almost be set down as forgetfulness.



You must not always expect to hear a good explanation of a man's reasons for his conduct. In the first place he does not carry such things about with him in a producible shape; some of them he has probably forgotten, although their influence may still remain strongly upon his mind; and such as he does give are likely to be those which he thinks will have most weight with the person to whom he is speaking.

In giving way to selfish persons, remember that you cannot sacrifice yourself alone. Any relation in which you may be placed to them, especially if you are the superior, is not a thing that concerns you only; but is, as it were, a trust for society in general.

It is hard to judge about quarrels, for the points on which they openly break out have often no more to do with the real grounds of difference than the place of a battle with the cause of the war. Many a quarrel, after running for a long time under ground, gushes forth with a vehemence which seems unaccountable; and it is difficult to divine what lands it has passed through in its hidden course. Any particular outbreak cannot safely be taken as an index of the general conduct of the parties towards each other.

Playfulness is a good means of softening social distances. A stiff, grave man is always in danger of being feared too much. On the other hand, as the self-love of many people is suspicious in the extreme, you must expect that your most innocent playfulness will often be mistaken for ridicule.

It is a duty not to allow yourself to think of any living

man, still less to treat him, as if your hopes of his amendment were utterly dead and gone.

You must not be much surprised at the ingratitude of those to whom you have given nothing but money.

Once give your mind to suspicion, and there will be sure to be food enough for it. In the stillest night the air is filled with sounds for the wakeful ear that is resolved to listen.

A misproud man resolves to abide by the evil words which he has spoken in anger. This freezing of foam is wilfully unnatural, and turns a brief madness into a settled insanity.

A man of any wisdom, in domestic authority, so far from making large claims to the love of those whom he rules, and exacting all manner of observance as his due, will often think with fear how unworthy he is of the affection even of the dullest and least-gifted creature about him.

In commenting on any error of an agent or dependent, beware of making your own vexation, and not the real offence, the measure of your blame. This is a most frequent source of injustice, and one, moreover, which tends to prevent anything like consistent training.

The poor, the humble, and your dependents, will often be afraid to ask their due from you : be the more mindful of it yourself.

With what degree of satisfaction do you feel that you

could meet those persons in a future state over whom you have any influence now? Your heart's answer to this question is somewhat of a test of your behaviour towards them.

How ready we should often be to forgive those who are angry with us, if we could only see how much of their anger arises from vexation with themselves for having begun to be angry at all.

I am not sorry to introduce a maxim, like the above, which relates, perhaps, rather more to dependents than to those in authority, and which claims a place among precepts on social government, only as it may tend to promote social harmony and peace. I have not attempted, throughout, to give any account of the duties of dependents, which, however, are easily inferred as supplementary to the duties of masters. It is not to be supposed that any relation in life is one-sided, that kindness is to be met by indifference, or that loyalty to those who lead us is not a duty of the highest order. But, fortunately, the proneness of men to regard with favour those put in authority over them is very strong; and I have but little fear of finding any large body of thoughtful and kind masters suffering from permanent indifference, or ingratitude, on the part of their dependents.

I cannot close the chapter better than by entreating those who are endeavouring to carry on any system of benevolence, to be very watchful in the management of details, and to strengthen themselves against any feelings of disgust and weariness which may encroach upon them, when their undertaking has lost the attraction of novelty. Details are like the fibres at the root of a tree: without their

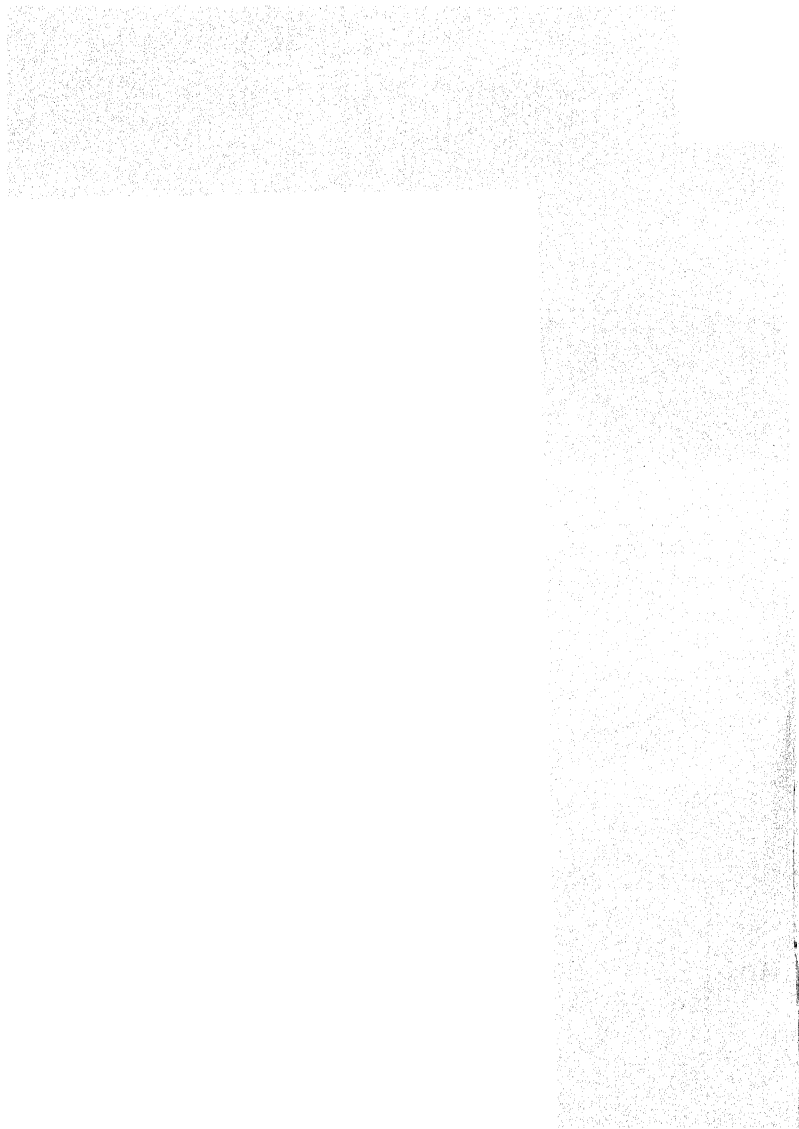
aid the tree would have but little hold against the wind ; they are the channels for its terrestrial nutriment ; they are its ties to earth, its home and birthplace ; and, insignificant as they seem, it could live almost better without light than without them. Here it is that practical wisdom comes in—that faculty, without which the greatest gifts may serve to make a noise and a flame, and nothing more. It holds its object neither too near nor too far off ; without exaggerating trifles, it can see that small things may be essential to the successful application of great principles ; it is moderate in its expectations ; does not imagine that all men must be full of its projects ; and holds its course with calmness, with hope, and with humility.

You must not enter upon a career of usefulness without expecting innumerable vexations and crosses to affect the details of any project or system you may undertake. And when the novelty of your purpose has somewhat worn off, and you have to meet with the honest opposition of other minds, as well as to contend against their vanity, their selfishness, and their unreasonableness, it requires a high and full source for your benevolence to flow from, if it would bear down these annoyances. Even when they cannot dry up the stream, or change its current, if you are not watchful over yourself, they may make it flow more feebly. The very prospect of success is to some minds a great temptation to make them slacken their efforts. Throughout the course of our pursuit, we are never, perhaps, so prone to be weary and to repine as when we begin to feel sure of ultimate success, but at the same time to perceive that a long and definite period must elapse before the completion of our undertaking.

Against the many temptations that beset a man in such a career, I do not believe that any good feeling, which stands

upon no other than mere human relations, will be found a sufficient support. No sentimental benevolence will do; nor even, at all times, a warm and earnest philanthropy: there must be the inexorable sense of duty arising from a man's apprehension, if but in a feeble degree, of his relation towards God, as well as to his fellow-man.

*THOUGHTS IN THE CLOISTER  
AND THE CROWD.*



## THOUGHTS IN THE CLOISTER AND THE CROWD.

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WE all seek happiness so eagerly, that in the pursuit we often lose that joyous sense of existence, and those quiet daily pleasures, the value of which our pride alone prevents us from acknowledging.

It has been said with some meaning, that if men would but rest in silence, they might always hear the music of the spheres.

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Those who never philosophised until they met with disappointments, have mostly become disappointed philosophers.

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The unfortunate Ladurlad did not desire the sleep that for ever fled his weary eyelids with more earnestness than most people seek the deep slumber of a decided opinion.

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The business of the head is to form a good heart, and not merely to rule an evil one, as is generally imagined.

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There is hardly a more common error than that of taking the man who has *one* talent, for a genius.



The world will find out that part of your character which concerns it: that which especially concerns yourself, it will leave for you to discover.

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They tell us that "Pity is akin to Love;" if so, Pity must be a poor relation.

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The step from the sublime to the ridiculous is not so short as the step from the confused to the sublime in the minds of most people, for want of a proper standard of comparison. If you hear a fine sentence from Æschines, you may remember one still more noble from Demosthenes: but when a person comes up to you and exclaims, "I have put my hand into the hamper; I have looked upon the sacred barley; I have eaten out of the drum; I have drunk and was well pleased; I have said *konx ompax*, and it is finished!"<sup>1</sup> you are confounded, and instantly begin to admire. We always believe the clouds to be much higher than they really are, until we see them resting on the shoulders of the mountains.

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There is no occasion to regard with continual dislike one who had formerly a mean opinion of your merits; for you are never so sure of permanent esteem as from the man who once esteemed you lightly, and has corrected his mistake—if it be a mistake.

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A friend is one who does not laugh when you are in a ridiculous position. Some may deny such a test, saying,

<sup>1</sup> Eleusinian Mysteries,

that if a man have a keen sense of the ridiculous, he cannot help being amused, even though his friend be the subject of ridicule. No,—your friend is one who ought to sympathise with you, and not with the multitude.

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You cannot expect that a friend should be like the atmosphere, which confers all manner of benefits upon you, and without which indeed it would be impossible to live, but at the same time is never in your way.

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The proverbs of a country are often the proverbs of that country, and cannot be translated without losing some of their meaning; but there is an eastern proverb which rightly belongs to the western world—

“People resemble still more the time in which they live, than they resemble their fathers.”

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It would often be as well to condemn a man unheard as to condemn him upon the reasons which he openly avows for any course of action.

The apparent foolishness of others is but too frequently our own ignorance, or, what is much worse, it is the direct measure of our own tyranny.

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The extreme sense of perfection in some men is the greatest obstacle to their success.

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Emulation, sometimes but a more plausible name for

envy, is like the Amreeta cup: it may be the greatest blessing—it often proves the greatest curse. When a youth is taught to feel emulation, not of putting further and further back the bounds of science, not of comprehending the mighty minds of olden time, not of benefiting the state by profound policy, but of *being* a great mathematician, a distinguished scholar, a successful statesman; then the cup—a golden one perhaps, for

“ . . . nulla aconita bibuntur  
Fictilibus,”

—will eventually prove one of unmixed bitterness.

Those who once submit to the tyranny of this absorbing passion, only struggle—to become its more devoted victims. Like the spur-ridden horses in the Corso, the greater efforts they make the more severe are their sufferings under an ever-clinging tormentor.

There is nothing more painful to contemplate than a young child impressed with a desire to excel, when a fatal self-sentience has usurped the place of childishness. It has been said that the children of the poor are never young: I am sure that the children of the ambitious are equally unfortunate. Rousseau observes that “it is very strange, that ever since mankind have taken it into their heads to trouble themselves so much about the education of children, they should never have thought of any other instruments to effect their purpose than those of emulation, jealousy, envy, pride, covetousness, and servile fear—all passions the most dangerous, the most apt to ferment, and the most fit to corrupt the soul, even before the body is formed. With every premature instruction we instil into the head, we implant a vice in the bottom of the heart.”

Let no colour be given to the theory of this morbid

philosopher, who seems to have thought that people met together to constitute society for the purpose of more effectually tormenting each other. There are many objects that call for our united energies. Let us strive to overcome the obstinacy of the material world, to make nature surrender up her secrets, to ascertain with more certainty the best forms of government, the wisest modes of life, the real limits of the understanding; but do not let us for ever be engaged in a petty contest with our fellow-men, in order that we may be, or appear to be, less ignorant than those around us.

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The noblest objects in this life may be too intensely regarded. Newton once gazed upon the sun until he was haunted by its image whithersoever he went and wheresoever he looked.

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The religion of some sectarians consists in a definite notion of an infinite subject.

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When the subtle man fails in deceiving those around him, they are loud in their reproaches; when he succeeds in deceiving his own conscience, it is silent. The last is not the least misfortune, for it were better to make many enemies than to silence one such friend.

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It is quite impossible to understand the character of a person from one action, however striking that action may be.

The youngest mathematician knows that one point is insufficient to determine a straight line, much less any thing

so curve-like as the character even of the most simple and upright of mankind.

If you are obliged to judge from a single action, let it not be a striking one.

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Men rattle their chains—to manifest their freedom.

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*“Eventus stultorum magister”*—and would that it were only over the minds of the foolish, and would that it were only over the minds of the spectators, that the event ruled so imperiously; but, alas! it is often not so important in itself as in the fatal influence it exercises over the mind, or I should rather say the temperament of the principal actor himself. A Brutus was not ashamed to conceal his patriotism under the mask of idiocy, and there have been men in all ages who were content to abide, who even felt a proud pleasure in abiding under the cloud for a season; but rare have been these instances, and few have found consolation in the idea which the poet of the desert might have suggested to them, *that the lesser lights alone are those which never suffer an eclipse*. Hence it is that the experienced have universally agreed in the immense advantage of early success.

The failure of many of our greatest men in their early career—a fact on which the ignorant and weak are fond of vainly leaning for support—is a very interesting subject for consideration.

The rebelliousness of great natures is a good phrase, but I fear it will not entirely satisfy all our questionings. It has been said, that if we could, with our limited capacities and muffled souls, compare this life and the future, and retain the impression, that our daily duties here would be neglected, and that all below would become “weary, flat, stale, and

unprofitable." Now may not the pursuit of any particular study or worldly aim become to the far-seeing genius disgusting in the same way? May he not be like one on a lofty rock, who can behold and comprehend all the objects in the distance, can thence discover the true path that leadeth to the glad city; but, from his very position, cannot without great pain and danger scrutinise the ground immediately under him? Many fail from the extent of their views. "Nevertheless," as Bacon says, "I shall yield, that he that cannot contract the sight of his mind, as well as disperse and dilate it, wanteth a great faculty."

There is another cause of failure that has not often been contemplated. The object may be too eagerly desired ever to be obtained. Its importance, even if it be important, may too often be presented to the mind. The end may always appear so clearly defined that the aspirant, forgetting the means that are necessary, forgetting the distance that must intervene, is for ever stretching out his hand to grasp that which is not yet within his power. The calm exercise of his faculties is prevented, the habit of concentrating his attention is destroyed, and one form under a thousand aspects disturbs his diseased imagination. The unhappy sailor thinks upon his home, and the smiling fields, and the village church, until he sees them for ever pictured in the deep, and with folded arms he continues to gaze, incapable alike of thought or action. This disease is called the calenture. *There is an intellectual calenture.*

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The worst use that can be made of success is to boast of it.

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Few have wished for memory so much as they have longed for forgetfulness.

I can understand the ambition of former days, when the earth, the birthplace of Jupiter, was the universe to those who inhabited it; when the stars but served to register "my nativity," and lead on the way to future fortune. I can understand the ambition of an Alexander, and still better his tears after having conquered a world which in his eyes was everything, and in ours is a mere point that will not even serve as a base for measuring the distances of the heavenly bodies: I can understand the fascination of ambitious pursuits at a time when art, science, and literature were in darkness; when religion itself was in its rude infancy;—but at the present day it is difficult to comprehend the ambition of a philosopher, of a Christian, of a Christian philosopher. And yet such things are.

Perhaps it is the secret thought of many, that an ardent love of power and wealth, however culpable in itself, is nevertheless a proof of superior sagacity. But in answer to this, it has been well remarked that even a child can clench its little hand the moment it is born; and if they imagine that the successful at any rate must be sagacious, let them remember the saying of a philosopher, *that the meanest reptiles are found at the summit of the loftiest pillars.*

If we are really in a state of intellectual progress; if we are not deceived by the outward shows of things; if we are not giving applause merely because across the stage

"Esseda festinant, pilenta, petorrita, naves;"

then indeed we may hope for the days when ambition, in the sense which the word now bears, will be the last infirmity to which a noble mind will own subjection.

The Simoon of the desert is not the only evil that may be avoided by stooping.

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The Pyramids! What a lesson to those who desire a name in the world does the fate of these restless, brick-piling monarchs afford! Their names are not known, and the only hope for them is, that by the labours of some cruelly industrious antiquarian they may at last become more *definite* objects of contempt.

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We should remember that in every undertaking each individual concerned has his own peculiar views; and that as no two human beings can have exactly the same motives, so they can never act, as the saying is, *with one mind*.

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We talk of early prejudices, of the prejudices of religion, of position, of education; but in truth we only mean the prejudices of others. It is by the observation of trivial matters that the wise learn the influence of prejudice over their own minds at all times, and the wonderfully moulding power which those minds possess in making all things around conform to the idea of the moment. Let a man but note how often he has seen likenesses where no resemblance exists; admired ordinary pictures, because he thought they were from the hands of celebrated masters; delighted in the commonplace observations of those who had gained a reputation for wisdom; laughed where no wit was; and he will learn with humility to make allowance for the effect of prejudice in others.

In a quarrel between two friends, if one of them, even the injured one, were, in the retirement of his chamber, to



consider himself as the hired advocate of the other at the court of wronged friendship ; and were to omit all the facts which told in his own favour, to exaggerate all that could possibly be said against himself, and to conjure up from his imagination a few circumstances of the same tendency ; he might with little effort make a good case for his former friend. Let him be assured that whatever the most skilful advocate could say, his poor friend really believes and feels ; and then, instead of wondering at the insolence of such a traitor walking about in open day, he will pity his friend's delusion, have some gentle misgivings as to the exact propriety of his own conduct, and perhaps sue for an immediate reconciliation.

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There are often two characters of a man—that which is believed in by people in general, and that which he enjoys among his associates. It is supposed, but vainly, that the latter is always a more accurate approximation to the truth, whereas in reality it is often a part which he performs to admiration ; while the former is the result of certain minute traits, certain inflections of voice and countenance, which cannot be discussed, but are felt as it were instinctively by his domestics and by the outer world. The impressions arising from these slight circumstances he is able to efface from the minds of his constant companions, or from habit they have ceased to observe them.

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We often err by contemplating an individual solely in his relation and behaviour to us, and generalising from that with more rapidity than wisdom. We might as well argue that the moon has no rotation about her axis, because the same hemisphere is always presented to our view.

We are pleased with one who instantly assents to our opinions ; but we love a proselyte.

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The accomplished hypocrite does not exercise his skill upon every possible occasion for the sake of acquiring facility in the use of his instruments. In all unimportant matters, who is more just, more upright, more candid, more honourable ?

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An elaborate defence, if not the best, is certainly the gravest form of accusation.

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Those who are successfully to lead their fellow-men, should have once possessed the nobler feelings. We have all known individuals whose magnanimity was not likely to be troublesome on any occasion ; but then they betrayed their own interests by unwisely omitting the consideration, that such feelings might exist in the breasts of those whom they had to guide and govern : for they themselves cannot even remember the time when in their eyes justice appeared preferable to expediency, the happiness of others to self-interest, or the welfare of a state to the advancement of a party.

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The ear is an organ of finer sensibility than the eye, according to the measurement of philosophers.

Remember this, ye diplomatists : there are some imperturbable countenances, but a skilful ear will almost infallibly detect guile.

Slight thinkers imagine that when a man is inattentive to the forms, he is also inattentive to the ways of the world.

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It is a shallow mind that suspects or rejects an offered kindness, because it is unable to discover the motive. It would have been as wise for the Egyptians to have scorned the pure waters of the Nile, because they were not quite certain about the source of that mighty river.

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To simulate is much easier than to dissemble.

Hence, he who is suffering from intense grief, is not cheerful, but wildly gay. Hence, the man of philanthropic feeling, after a short intercourse with the world, not unfrequently affects the misanthrope. Hence, strange as it may appear, a forwardness in society often arises from conscious timidity. The common saying, "extremes meet," is a statement of the fact, and not a solution of the difficulty.

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The sun is shining all around, but there are some who will only contemplate their own shadows.

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Strong feelings are generally allied to strong intellects, and both together form the truly great character. Even the great in science are not always exceptions; witness Galileo, Pascal, Newton, D'Alembert, Cuvier, and many others.

The great man is one of boundless love and extended sympathies, not the general philanthropist, "who makes animating speeches at religious meetings, about sending the words of truth and love through the whole family of man, and never speaks one loving and true word in his own

family :” but one who loves the good, the true, the beautiful ; who thinks not his own pursuit the only path of a wise man ; who thinks not his own sect the only ark in which the covenant is preserved ; who can weep over the weaknesses, and glory in the dignity and grandeur of human nature—himself a man. The poet has said, that

“ The man of abject soul in vain  
Shall walk the Marathonian plain ;  
Or thrid the shadowy gloom,  
That still invests the guardian pass,  
Where stood, sublime, Leonidas,  
Devoted to the tomb.”

Not only the Marathonian plain, but every spot on this bright earth, calls forth the sympathies of the great man, for it may have been a witness to human joys or human sufferings ; and the fields too he loveth for their own sake.

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Misery appears to improve the intellect, but this is only because it dismisses fear.

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Intellectual powers may dignify, but cannot diminish our sorrows ; and when the feelings are wounded, and the soul is disquieted within you, to seek comfort from purely intellectual employments, is but to rest upon a staff which pierces rather than supports.

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When your friend is suffering under great affliction, either be entirely silent, or offer none but the most common topics of consolation. For in the first place they are the best ; and also from their commonness they are easily understood. Extreme grief will not pay attention to any new thing.

There is a want of refinement in the man who loves a parody.

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It is commonly remarked, that we are indifferent to the evils and sufferings of a state through which we ourselves have passed. Hence, from the frequent cruelty of men to the brute creation, we may put some trust in the theory of Archelaus, who anticipated Lord Monboddo, and taught "that mankind had insensibly separated themselves from the common herd of the inferior animals." This philosopher, however, does not seem to have contemplated the probability of any relapse into the brute state.

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Irony is Contempt disguised as an actor in the ancient tragedy, with the buskin and the mask, at once elevated and concealed. It may give your adversary discomfort, but will never persuade him to alter his opinion; for, in order to convince, we must not only be, but appear in earnest; and, as the son of Sirach observes, "The finding out of parables is a wearisome labour of the mind."

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When we consider the incidents of former days, and perceive, while reviewing the long line of causes, how the most important events of our lives originated in the most trifling circumstances; how the beginning of our greatest happiness or greatest misery is to be attributed to a delay, to an accident, to a mistake; we learn a lesson of profound humility. This is the irony of life.

The irony of a little child and its questions, at times how bitter!

Those who support startling paradoxes in society, must expect severe treatment. By the articles of war, the conquerors never spare those who maintain indefensible positions.

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Eccentric people are never loved for their eccentricities.

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What is called firmness, is often nothing more than confirmed self-love.

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The *total* failure of many a scheme arises from the apparent certainty of its *partial* success.

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Many know how to please, but know not when they have ceased to give pleasure.

The same in arguing: they never lead people to a conclusion, and permit them to draw it for themselves; being unaware that most persons, if they had but placed one brick in a building, are interested in the progress, and boast of the success of a work in which they have been *so materially engaged*.

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There is an honesty which is but decided selfishness in disguise. The man who will not refrain from expressing his sentiments and manifesting his feelings, however unfit the time, however inappropriate the place, however painful to others this expression may be, lays claim forsooth to our approbation as an honest man, and sneers at those of finer sensibility as hypocrites.

Do not mistake energy for enthusiasm; the softest speakers are often the most enthusiastic of men.

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The best commentary upon any work of literature is a faithful life of the author. And one reason, among many, why it must always be so advantageous to read the works of the illustrious dead, is that their lives are more fairly written, and their characters better understood.

It may appear to an unthinking person that the life, perhaps an unobtrusive one, of the man who has devoted himself to abstract and speculative subjects, can be of no very considerable importance. But it is far otherwise. For instance, if Locke had never been engaged in the affairs of this world, would his biography have been of no importance if it had only informed us that for many years he devoted himself to the study of medicine? Are there no passages in his Essay concerning Human Understanding, which such a fact tends to elucidate? Or is it not, in reality, the clue to a right understanding of all his metaphysical writings?

How often does a single anecdote reveal the real motive which prompted an author to write a particular work, and the influence of which is visible in every page! "When I returned from Spain by Paris (says Lord Clarendon), Mr. Hobbes frequently came to me and told me his book (which he would call *Leviathan*) was then printing in England, and that he received every week a sheet to correct, of which he showed me one or two sheets, and thought it would be finished within little more than a month; and showed me the epistle to Mr. Godolphin, which he meant to set before it, and read it to me, and concluded that he knew, when I read his

book, I would not like it, and thereupon mentioned some of his conclusions. Upon which I asked him why he would publish such doctrine; to which, after a discourse between jest and earnest upon the subject, he said, '*The truth is, I have a mind to go home.*'" Perhaps this anecdote may explain many hard sayings in the *Leviathan*.

It is worthy of remark, that *The Prince* is now supposed to have been written solely from a wish to please the ruling powers, as appears in a private letter from Macchiavelli to his friend the Florentine ambassador at the Papal court, which was discovered at Rome, and first published to the world in 1810, by Ridolfi. In this letter Macchiavelli says that his work ought to be agreeable to a prince, and especially to a prince lately raised to power; and that he himself cannot continue to live as he was then living, without becoming contemptible through poverty. And also, in his dedication to Lorenzo de Medici, after having said that subjects understand the disposition of princes best, as it is necessary to descend into the plains to consider the nature of the mountains, he thus concludes—"And if your Magnificence from the very point of your highness will sometimes cast your eyes upon those inferior places, you will see how undeservedly I undergo an extreme and continual despoite of fortune."

After this we are not so much astonished at finding the following gentle admonition: "Let a prince therefore take the surest courses he can to maintain his life and state; the means will always be thought honourable, and be commended by every one."

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There is an embarrassed manner of speaking which arises from the crowd of ideas that press upon the attention of a



rich and well-stored mind ; but which is commonly supposed to be the effect of an imperfect conception of *one* idea.

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Thoughts there are, not to be translated into any language, and spirits alone can read them.

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Our knowledge of human nature is for the most part empirical ; and it would often be better, if, instead of endeavouring to say some new thing ourselves, we were to confirm without more words the sayings of another. I shall accordingly subjoin the following passage from South's sermons :—"Ingratitude sits on its throne, with Pride on its right hand, and Cruelty on its left, worthy supporters of such a state. You may rest upon this as a proposition of an eternal unfailing truth—that there neither is, nor ever was, any person remarkably ungrateful, who was not also insufferably proud ; nor, convertibly, any one proud, who was not equally ungrateful."

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The noblest works, like the temple of Solomon, are brought to perfection in silence.

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The man of genius may be a guide, but the man of talents will be a leader. And he who is so fortunate as to combine talents and genius, may become an inventor.

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Some of our law maxims are admirable rules of conduct. If, in spite of the censorious calumny of the world, we considered "a man innocent until he were proved guilty ;"

or if, in our daily thoughts, words, and actions, we did but "give the prisoner the benefit of the doubt;" what much better Christians we should become.

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That any necessary connection exists between gravity and wisdom has long been abandoned; but there is still a lurking belief that gravity and prudence are nearly allied. For all prudential purposes, you may as well be thoughtless as abstracted.

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Those who are devoted to science solely; the men

"Who never caught a noontide dream  
By murmur of a running stream,  
Could strip, for aught the prospect yields  
To *them*, their verdure from the fields;  
And take the radiance from the clouds  
In which the sun his setting shrouds;"

who look coldly round a superb edifice, and ask *why* it was built, and think *how* it was constructed, are not unlike the bones spoken of by the prophet Ezekiel—"And, behold, there were very many in the open valley, and lo, they were very dry." We ought to pray that either domestic affection, or refined philanthropy, or sincere religion, may be infused into their hard natures, saying, "O breath, breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

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It is an error to suppose that no man understands his own character. Most persons know even their failings very well, only they persist in giving them names different from those usually assigned by the rest of the world; and they

compensate for this mistake by naming, at first sight, with singular accuracy, these very same failings in others.

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Those who are much engaged in acquiring knowledge will not always have time for deep thought or intense feeling.

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Men love to contradict their general character. Thus a man is of a gloomy and suspicious temperament, is deemed by all morose, and ere long finds out the general opinion. He then suddenly deviates into some occasional acts of courtesy. Why? Not because he ought, not because his nature is changed; but because he dislikes being thoroughly understood. He will not be the *thing* whose behaviour on any occasion the most careless prophet can with certainty foretell.

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“ . . . Delight in little things,  
The buoyant child surviving in the man.”

Alas! it is not the child, but the boy that generally survives in the man.

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When we see the rapid motions of insects at evening, we exclaim, how happy they must be!—so inseparably are activity and happiness connected in our minds.

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The most enthusiastic man in a cause is rarely chosen as the leader.

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We have some respect for one who, if he tramples on the

feelings of others, tramples on his own with equal apparent indifference.

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Tact is the result of refined sympathy.

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It is frequently more safe to ridicule a man personally than to decry the order to which he belongs.

Every man has made up his mind about his own merits ; but, like the unconvinced believers in religion, he will not listen with patience to any doubts upon a subject which he himself would be most unwilling to investigate.

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The love of being considered well-read is one of the most fatal of all the follies which subdue the present generation. It is not so much what we have read, as what we can readily recall, that will give us real pleasure and permanent advantage. I do not mean for a moment to contend that it is necessary to read every book with great attention, or to say that our taste may not insensibly be formed by works of which we do not remember a single sentence. In the pure sciences, to have caught the modes and the spirit of the reasoning will perhaps be sufficient for all who do not intend to pursue these branches of knowledge ; but what is the use of having read a book of travels if we only remember the frontispiece, "A picture of the author in the dress of the country !" What avails it to have perused the lives of the learned, and the witty, and the valiant, and the wise, if, without having gained one single rule of action, we merely remember that in all ages the generality of mankind have contrived to make themselves miserable by their own follies and their own vices ; and that when there would

have been a happy one, he was persecuted? What avails it to have read so many polemical discussions, if we merely remember the intemperate zeal and the learned bitterness which gave equal animation to each contending party? Surely it would be better to remember Coleridge's "Ode to Dejection," Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality from the recollections of early childhood," Shelley's "Invocation to Night," Southey's beautiful description of

"How happily the years  
Of Thalaba went by,"

Manfred's last Soliloquy, the fond look of "The adventurous Boy," leaving his native village, in the "Pleasures of Memory;" Moore's Irish melody,

"As a beam o'er the face of the waters may glow;"

and the "Cotter's Saturday Night;" than to have read all the poets from Chaucer downwards, and possess a dim, shadowy notion rather of their merits than of them—enough forsooth to talk critically.

We want the brilliant ideas of the poet, and the majestic thoughts of the philosopher, as companions for our weary hours, to charm away the solemn dulness of every-day life, to wander with us over the hills, in solitude to form the link between us and our fellow-creatures, in the society of those we love, to be a test of their perfect sympathy; and therefore we must not spare the labour of imprinting them on the tablets of our memory for ever. "Knowledge," as Bacon in his overflowing language exclaims, "is not a couch where-upon to rest a searching and restless spirit; or a terrace for a wandering and variable mind to walk up and down with a fair prospect; or a tower of state for a proud mind to raise itself upon; or a fort or commanding ground for strife and

contention ; or a shop for profit or sale—but a rich store-house for the glory of the Creator, and the relief of man's estate."

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The opinion which a person gives of any book is frequently not so much a test of his intellect or his taste, as it is of the extent of his reading. An indifferent work may be joyfully welcomed by one who has neither had time nor opportunity to form a literary taste. It is from comparisons between different parts of the same book that you must discover the depth and judgment of an uncultivated mind.

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"It is my opinion," says Herodotus, "that the Nile overflows in the summer season, because in the winter the sun, driven by the storms from his usual course, ascends into the higher regions of the air above Libya."

Many a man will smile at the delightful simplicity of the historian, and still persevere in dogmatising about subjects upon which he does not even possess information enough to support him in hazarding a conjecture.

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It is not in the solar spectrum only that the least warmth is combined with the deepest colour.

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How often we should stop in the pursuit of folly, if it were not for the difficulties that continually beckon us onwards.

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Simple Ignorance has in its time been complimented by the names of most of the vices, and of all the virtues.

Extremes do *not* meet, but are often linked together.

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Respect and dutiful kindness are the ashes of love ; and are not unfrequently found in greatest abundance where the flame is altogether extinct.

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No man ever praised two persons *equally*—and pleased them both.

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Solitude is of many kinds. There is the solitude of our own chamber—the solitude of the gentle walk—of the great library—of the gay ball-room—of the desert. Solitude must not be confounded with retirement. A man may be solitary without retiring from the world ; may seek retirement, and yet not be solitary. Some are impatient of the human voice, others of the human countenance ; the former are contemplative, the latter misanthropical. The former in their lonely walks would courteously return, rather pleased than pained, the silent salutation of the unobtrusive peasant ; to the others, nature undeformed by the footsteps of man alone is tolerable.

A great many wise sayings have been uttered about the effects of solitary retirement ; but the motives which impel men to seek it are not more various than the effects which it produces on different individuals. One thing is certain, that those who can with truth affirm that they are “never less alone than when alone,” might generally add that they never feel more lonely than when *not* alone.

A keen observer of mankind has said, that “to aspire is to be alone :” he might have extended his aphorism—to think deeply upon any subject is indeed to be alone.

In the world of mind, as in that of matter, we always occupy a position.

He who is continually changing his point of view will see more, and that too more clearly, than one who, statue-like, for ever stands upon the same pedestal, however lofty and well-placed that pedestal may be.

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A very grave author, Agrippa of Nettesheim by name, who lived in those times which are familiarly called the Dark Ages, wrote a serious treatise, "*De nobilitate et præcellentiâ fœminei sexus*," in which, not omitting our first parents, he endeavours to show that throughout all time women have been very superior to men. But I do not remember that he devoted an especial chapter to the consideration of the patient endurance of women: and in this how measureless is their superiority! Does a man suffer injury, all around him feel his bitterness. The world is but a stage for exhibiting his wrath; and if any one presumes to complain, he answers with the pride of an Achilles—"I too have suffered." A woman endures with cheerfulness, *suffers so that those around her suffer not; for*

"That woman could not be of nature's making,  
Whom, being kind, her misery made not kinder."

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The feelings often cut a Gordian knot, which reason could never have untied; and the oracle—is it not fulfilled?

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Some people are too foolish—to commit follies.

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The knowledge of others which experience gives us is of



slight value when compared with that which we obtain from having proved the inconstancy of our own desires.

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The world will tolerate many vices, but not their diminutives.

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The vain man and the proud man both love praise. The former is mortified if but one withhold his applause; the latter is not discontented if but one applaud—and *that one is himself*.

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A great and frequent error in our judgment of human nature is to suppose that those sentiments and feelings have no existence, which may be only for a time concealed.

The precious metals are not found at the surface of the earth, except in sandy places.

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It is a weak thing to tell half your story, and then ask your friend's advice—a still weaker thing to take it.

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The maxim, "*noscitur a sociis*," is true to a certain extent; but it is generally applied to prove something which such a maxim as *noscitur a socio* would render only probable.

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How to gain the advantages of society, without at the same time losing ourselves, is a question of no slight difficulty. The wise man often follows the crowd at a little distance, in order that he may not come suddenly upon it, nor become entangled with it, and that he may with some

means of amusement maintain a clear and quiet pathway.

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The author of a book called *Rural Philosophy* laments that such extravagant regard has been paid to the productions of pagan writers ; that though we possess so much that is wise, so much that is beautiful, and at the same time so much that is unread, in the literature of our own country ; yet we still continue to go down to the Philistines "to sharpen, every one his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock," as if there were no smith in Israel. Would that this were the only cause of lamentation ! but how imperfectly is the work executed among the Philistines, and what little use is generally made of the share, the coulter, the axe, and the mattock when sharpened. We are told that the foundation is being laid, that the individual will himself complete the superstructure ; but youth, with its anxious love of knowledge, passes by ; and the poets, the historians, the moralists, the metaphysicians, the divines of his fatherland, are frequently unknown even by name to the hypercritical scholar who can give the various readings in a fragment of Æschylus or Aristophanes.

There is a war at present going on against the study of the dead languages. I should be sorry to see the enemies of our present system prevail ; for there are immense advantages which arise from the study of the science of grammar in the dead languages.<sup>1</sup> Even if it were possible for these advantages to be obtained in any other way, I should still be sorry if our youths had not the wit of Horace, the wisdom of Thucydides, the tenderness of Sophocles, the grand simplicity of good old Homer, urged upon them

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Sewell's *Cultivation of the Intellect*.

for a time. But, on the other hand, it would be well to consider whether the defects pointed out can be remedied, and the universal application of the system still maintained—and if not, whether the benefit arising from an exception in some particular cases, would be entirely counterbalanced by the evil of making any exception whatever.

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It requires a strong mind to bear up against several languages. Some persons have learnt so many, that they have ceased to think in any one. Roger Ascham's opinion is, that "as a hawk fleeth not hie with one wing, so a man reacheth not to excellency with one tongue." But the scholar seems to have forgotten that the Greeks had no dead languages to learn; yet poets, historians, and philosophers did attain to some excellency among so unfortunate a people. "The Greeks," says an eloquent writer, "who were masters of composition, were ignorant of all languages but their own. They concentrated their study of the genius of expression upon one tongue. To this they owe that blended simplicity and strength of style, which the imitative Romans, with all their splendour, never attained."

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Pride, if not the origin, is the medium of all wickedness—the atmosphere, without which it would instantly die away.

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Tolerance is the only real test of civilisation.

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Some are contented to wear the mask of foolishness, in order to carry on their vicious schemes; and not a few are

willing to shelter their folly behind the respectability of downright vice.

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There are some books which we at first reject, because we have neither felt, nor seen, nor thought, nor suffered enough to understand and appreciate them. Perhaps *The Excursion* is one of these.

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A great library! What a mass of human misery is here commemorated!—how many buried hopes surround us! The author of that work was the greatest natural philosopher that ever enlightened mankind. His biographers are now disputing whether at one period of his life he was not of unsound mind—but all agree that he was afterwards able to understand his own writings.

The author of those numerous volumes was logician, metaphysician, natural historian, philosopher; his sanity was never doubted, and with his last breath he regretted his birth, mourned over his life, expressed his fear of death, and called upon the Cause of causes to pity him. His slightest thoughts continued to domineer over the world for ages, until they were in some measure silenced by those works which contain the unfettered meditations of a very great man, who, being more careless than corrupt in the administration of his high office, has gone down to posterity, as

“The wisest, brightest, meanest, of mankind.”

For his wisdom has embalmed his meanness.

Those volumes contain the weighty, if not wise opinions of one who, amidst penury and wretchedness, first learnt to moralise with companions as poor and wretched as himself.

Even in his latter years, when sought by a monarch, and listened to with submission by all who approached him, his life can scarcely be called a happy one; yet he must have enjoyed some moments of triumph, if not of happiness, in contemplating the severe but well-merited rebuke which he inflicted upon that courtier, who could behold his difficulties with all the indifference that belongs to good-breeding, and then thought fit, in the hour of his success, to encumber him with paltry praises.

Those poems were the burning words of one

“ . . . Cradled into poetry by wrong,  
Who learnt in suffering what he taught in song.”

The slightest foibles of this unhappy man have been brought into odious prominence, for he was the favourite author of his age, and therefore the property of the public.

That boyish book absolved its author from a father's cares; and he was one to whom those cares would have been dearest joys, who loved to look upon a poor man's child. Listen to the music of his sadness—

“ I see the deep's untrampled floor  
With green and purple seaweeds strown;  
I see the waves upon the shore,  
Like light dissolved in star-showers, thrown:  
I sit upon the sands alone,  
The lightning of the noontide ocean  
Is flashing round me, and a tone  
Arises from its measured motion,  
How sweet! did any heart now share in my emotion.”

The sharp arrows of criticism were successfully directed against that next volume, and are said to have been the means of hurrying its author to that world of dreams and

shadows, for which, in the critic's opinion, he was so pre-eminently fitted.

“Where is the youth, for deeds immortal born,  
Who loved to whisper to th' embattled corn,  
And cluster'd woodbines, breathing o'er the stream  
Endymion's beauteous passion for a dream?”

You already smile, my friend ; but to know the heights and the depths, you must turn your attention to those numberless, unread, unheard-of volumes. Their authors did not suffer from the severity of the critic or the judge, but were only neglected. If Mephistopheles ever requires rest and seclusion—— But, hark ! is there not a laugh ? and that grotesque face in the carved wood-work, how scoffingly it is looking down upon us !

---

Oh, that mine enemy had written a book !—and that it were my life ; unless indeed it provoked my friend to write another.

It has always appeared to me a strong argument for the non-existence of spirits, that these friendly microscopic biographers are not haunted by the ghosts of the unfortunate men whom they persist in holding up to public contempt.

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Private correspondence, unless upon literary or scientific subjects, ought not often to be published. The contrary practice has a very bad influence on the letter-writing of the present generation, who are thus tempted to write for effect, and who never can entirely forget the author in the friend.

We are frequently understood the least by those who have known us the longest.

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The reasons which any man offers to you for his own conduct betray his opinion of your character.

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There is a versatility which appears profound ; as there is a rapid motion of unconnected things which presents an appearance of continuity.

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If you are very often deceived by those around you, you may be sure that you deserve to be deceived ; and that instead of railing at the general falseness of mankind, you have first to pronounce judgment on your own jealous tyranny, or on your own weak credulity.

Those only who can bear the truth will hear it.

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The wisest maxims are not those which fortify us against the deceit of others.

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Very subtle-minded persons often complain that their friends fall from them ; and these complaints are not altogether unjust. One reason of this is that they display so much dialectic astuteness on every occasion, that their friends feel certain that such men, however unjustifiably they may behave, will always be able to justify themselves to themselves. Now we mortals are strangely averse to loving those who are never in the wrong, and much more those who are always ready to prove themselves in the right.

You cannot ensure the gratitude of others for a favour conferred upon them in the way which is most agreeable to yourself.

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How singularly mournful it is to observe in the conversation or writings of a very superior man and original thinker, homely, if not commonplace expressions about the vanity of human wishes, the mutability of this world, the weariness of life. It seems as if he felt that his own bitter experience had taken away the triteness from that which is nevertheless so trite; as if he thought it were needless to seek fine phrases, and as idle a mockery as it would be to gild an instrument of torture.

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It must be a very weary day to the youth, when he first discovers that after all he will only become a man.

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It is unwise for a great man to reason as if others were like him: it is much more unwise to treat them as if they were very different.

---

An author's works are his esoteric biography.

---

We are not so easily guided by our most prominent weaknesses, as by those of which we are least aware.

---

There was a law in the Roman empire, that he who foretold the death of the emperor should lose his own life And shall the man who loves with an appearance of oracular wisdom to declare that our star has culminated;



that the time has come ; that there are manifest signs of decay ; that our empire is fast fading from us—shall he be suffered with impunity to commit so great an offence against the majesty of the state ? Such prophets

“Deserve the fate their fretting lips foretell.”

---

Men are ruined by the exceptions to their general rules of action. This may seem a mockery, but it is nevertheless a fact to be observed in the records of history, as well as in the trivial occurrences of daily life. One who is habitually dark and deceptive, commits a single act of confidence, and his subtle schemes are destroyed for ever. His first act of extravagance ruins the cautious man. The coward is brave for a moment, and dies ; the hero wavers for the first—and the last time.

---

If thy cause be just, choose for a judge an enemy rather than a friend. For thy friend often loveth thee too well to do thee justice ; and surely thine enemy hateth thee too much to be unjust in thy cause.

---

Some persons are insensible to flattering words ; but who can resist the flattery of modest imitation ?

---

An inferior demon is not a great man, as some writers would fain persuade us.

The world would be in a more wretched state than it is at present, if riches and honours were distributed according to merit alone. It is the complaint of the wisest of men, that he “returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to

the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill ; but time and chance happeneth to them all." But if it were otherwise, if bread were indeed the portion of the wise, then the hungry would have something to lament over more severe even than the pangs of hunger. The belief that merit is generally neglected forms the secret consolation of almost every human being, from the mightiest prince to the meanest peasant. Divines have contended that the world would cease to be a place of trial if a system of impartial distribution according to merit were adopted. This is true, for it would then be a place of punishment.

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There is no power in the wisdom of the insincere.

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We long to search out the inscrutable mysteries of the grave, but we slight the knowledge of the death-bed, which it requires but little penetration to obtain.

It is there, on the couch of sorrow and of pain, that the thought of one purely virtuous action is like the shadow of a lofty rock in the desert—like the light footstep of that little child who continued to dance before the throne of the unjust king, when his guards had fled, and his people had forsaken him—like the single thin stream of light which the unhappy captive has at last learned to love—like the soft sigh before the breeze that wafts the becalmed vessel and her famished crew to the haven where they would be.

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Conviction never abides without a welcome from the heart.

Indulge your imagination, if it must be indulged, in adorning the past, and not in creating the future.

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Entrust a secret to one whose importance will not be much increased by divulging it.

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It is necessary to be decisive ; not because deliberate counsel would never improve your designs, but because the foolish and the unthinking will certainly act if there be but a moment's pause.

---

Those who are always railing at metaphysics and psychology are not to be blamed. Why should they be anxious to study anything in which they can have so little interest as the nature and powers of the mind ?

---

Those who honestly discourage the study of metaphysics on account of what appears to them its abstruse nature and evil tendency, should remember the admirable advice that has been offered to all such timid persons by one of the greatest of modern metaphysicians.

“ I would remind them, that as long as there are men in the world to whom the *Γνωθὶ σεαυτὸν* is an instinct and a command from their own nature, so long will there be metaphysicians and metaphysical speculations ; that false metaphysics can be effectually counteracted by true metaphysics alone ; and that if the reasoning be clear, solid, and pertinent, the truth deduced can never be the less valuable

on account of the depth from which it may have been drawn."<sup>1</sup>

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The practical man—an especial favourite in this age—often takes the field with his single fact against a great principle, in the reckless spirit of one who would not hesitate to sever the thread on which he is unable to string his own individual pearl—perhaps a false one—even though he should scatter many jewels worthy of a prince's diadem.

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Even the meanest are mighty to do evil.

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Remember that to classify is the work of genius alone; and then judge how much faith ought to be reposed in the classifications which are generally received. Some adventitious circumstance, common to all, is made the connecting link between natures in reality differing in all their essential attributes; and then the world, delighted at its own sagacity, hastens to compare the things or persons so judiciously classed, as if they were the same in kind.

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If there is any one quality of the mind in which the really great have conspired, as it were, to surpass other men, it is moral courage. He who possesses this quality may sometimes be made a useful tool or a ready sacrifice in the hands of crafty statesmen; but let him be the chief, and not the subordinate, give him the field, grant him the opportunity, and his name will not deserve to be unwritten in the records of his country. When such a man perceives

<sup>1</sup> *Biographia Literaria.*

that if he fail, every one will be able to understand the risk that has been incurred ; but that if he succeed, no one will estimate the danger that has silently been overcome ; he bows, nevertheless, to the supreme dictates of his own judgment, regardless alike of the honours of his own age, and the praises of posterity.

It requires some moral courage to disobey, and yet there have been occasions when obedience would have been defeat.

But it is not only in the council, in the senate, in the field, that its merits are so pre-eminent. In private life, what daily deceit would be avoided, what evils would be remedied, if men did but possess more moral courage ! —not that false image of it which proceeds from a blind and inconsiderate rashness, from an absence both of forethought and imagination ; but that calm reliance on the decisions of reason, that carelessness of the undeserved applause of our neighbour, which will induce the great man to act according to his own informed judgment, and not according to the opinions of those who will not know, and who could never appreciate his motives.

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Feeble applause may arise from a keen and fastidious sense of the slightest imperfection ; but it is more frequently to be attributed to an inadequate notion of the dangers which have been avoided, and the difficulties which have been overcome.

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The trifling of a great man is never trivial.

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The study of abstruse and speculative subjects ought to

be one of the most certain methods of implanting a spirit of practical tolerance. He who has reasoned about his own identity, and entertained doubts upon the existence of the material world, cannot surely be astonished at finding two very different opinions upon any civil or religious question.

---

When two disputants relinquish a discussion, each apparently more convinced by his adversary's arguments of the goodness of his own cause, we imagine that debates of this kind can produce no beneficial effect. We are mistaken: after a well-fought battle both parties send their herald to claim a victory, but under cover of night the vanquished will find out their defeat, and retire in silence to their ships.

---

It is difficult to discover the estimation in which one man holds another's powers of mind by seeing them together. The soundest intellect and the keenest wit will sometimes shrink at the vivacity, and pay an apparent deference to the energy of mere cleverness; as Faust, when overcome by loud sophistry, exclaims, "He who is determined to be right, and has but a tongue, will be right undoubtedly."

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You wonder that your friend listens with such patience to your catalogue of his peculiar faults and vices; while he thinks that you are but enumerating those distinctions which separate him from the multitude, and is somewhat flattered at finding himself an object of your continual attention.

He who, after considering the merits of a system, turns instantly to the attack upon it, does not always pursue the most judicious mode for the discovery of truth or the detection of error ; and moreover, he does not allow his own mind sufficient influence. Perhaps the mind from its manifold stores would have added strength to the system. Perhaps it would have detected the fallacy without having recourse to the arguments advanced against it by others. The most fatal bigotry may certainly be produced by reading only one side of a question, but at the same time it is not altogether wise to treat the intellect as a mere court of justice, and always to bring the accuser and the accused immediately to confront one another.

It is not to be forgotten that two waves of light may interfere in such a manner as to produce total darkness.

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If you would understand your own age, read the works of fiction produced in it. People in disguise speak freely.

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It appears wonderful to you that the world should continue to be deceived by the same deceiver ; and you think that your knowledge of a crafty man's craftiness will assuredly defeat his most subtle machinations. Believe it not ;—you may discover part of his schemes, *but there lives not a more complete dupe than he who sees through half the design of an accomplished dissembler.*

---

The account which Lord Bolingbroke gives of Dr. Cudworth is, that he read too much to think enough, and admired too much to think freely. The first part of this

sentence might be applied to many persons in our own day, but is peculiarly applicable to Cudworth, whose learning never, like that of Bishop Watson, enlivened by severe disdain, or by sarcastic bitterness, like that of Warburton, is oppressive in the extreme. But in the second clause there lurks a popular and dangerous fallacy. It is the man who sees but little to admire that is always found to be the sure slave of some fatal prejudice. Nothing can be more unphilosophical than to adopt an eclectic method ; but he who does not perceive something to admire in almost every system will not choose the best whenever it may be presented to his observation.

Wretched indeed is the mental state of that man who, by a strange fatality, is doomed to perceive the reflection of his own weak and inconclusive nature in all the works of others ; and seeing that, and that only, scatters his censure with lavish profusion, in the vain hope that he is manifesting his own intellectual superiority.

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You may be forgiven for an injury, which, when made known to the world, will render you alone the object of its ridicule.

---

The habit of deluding our friends by sophisms, and of carrying on warfare by throwing dust in the eyes of our antagonists, is as frequent now as ever it was in the days of the schoolmen. How unkind it is to sacrifice truth to the amusement of the passing moment ! Has the wisest amongst us any more right to trifle with the meanest intellect, than the strong man has to spoil and oppress his neighbour ? Is the abuse of intellectual power the less



culpable because no laws can be made to restrain it? But there is some comfort for the injured in this case. Such a mode of arguing infallibly brings with it its own punishment; and he who has long deceived his hearers will at last become the unconscious dupe of his own base sophistry.

We may sometimes be deluded into a right conclusion, but such results are like the countries we arrive at in our dreams; and the very first inquiry as to how we could have performed the journey convinces us that we have made no journey at all, and even in our sleep we know that it is but a dream.

The character of Bayle, as given by his great antagonist, is so applicable here, that, whether it be just or not, I shall make no apology for transcribing it. "Mr. Bayle, the last supporter of this paradox, is of a very different character from these Italian sophists (Pomponatius and Cardan). A writer who, to the utmost strength and clearness of reasoning, hath added all the liveliness and delicacy of wit; who, pervading human nature at his ease, struck into the province of paradox, as an exercise for the unwearied vigour of his mind; who, with a soul superior to the sharpest attacks of fortune, and a heart practised to the best philosophy, had not yet enough of real greatness to overcome that last foible of superior minds, the temptation of honour which the academic exercise of wit is conceived to bring to its professors."

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There are many dangers like comets—terrible indeed in their aspect to the vulgar, but of such a nature that the heavens may be seen through them by philosophers.

When a subtle distinction is drawn between two characters, those who can discern its nature, in their delight at an intellectual triumph, will often neglect to perceive the injustice of its application.

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The suspicious may perhaps have ceased to be guilty of the wickedness they are for ever imputing to others.

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There are many who do not perceive that in the endeavour to remove those ornaments which in their opinion conceal and finally subdue the best qualities of the heart, they are destroying the strongest aids to virtue. Romance, refinement, sensibility, are terms which of themselves will always provoke the idle laughter of the selfish, the coarse, and the hard-hearted. But it is vexatious to behold the real friends of virtue priding themselves on their strength of mind, and joining with the worldly and the hard-hearted, to decry that which often immediately proceeds from principles which they themselves would desire to see established, and acting upon which, they have undertaken so perilous an enterprise with such unworthy allies. I know it may be said that it is against the excess that their ridicule is directed. But let them feel certain that an intercourse with the world will destroy all that they would wish to be destroyed—and, alas! much more; and that they will never have cause to reproach their consciences with any omission in this matter.

---

Music recalls a state of feeling, and not merely a series of incidents. When we listen to the long-forgotten melody, we do not review the scenes and actions of our childhood in

succession, but we become for the moment children once again.

A celebrated writer has lamented that in our language so little has been said of music, worthy of such a subject. This neglect, however, may have arisen from a consciousness that words must ever sound so feeble in attempting to express the magic power of melody.

"Your music's power your music must disclose,  
And what light is, 'tis only light that shows."

---

There are moments of indecision both before and after the most decided step of the most decisive of mankind, and very few there are who regard or profit by the latter. The reaction that everybody may foresee both in himself and others, is for the most part entirely disregarded.

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It were certainly charitable, and perhaps just, to suppose that it is in their haste to regain the paths of innocence, that the guilty so often add stupidity to guilt.

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How little do they know of human nature, who imagine that pride is likely to be subdued by adversity.

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If there is any one thing in which wisdom is pre-eminently conspicuous, it is in the wonderful ease with which its possessor is enabled to set apart the materials from which a correct opinion may be formed. The fool perceives one circumstance, and cannot withhold his facile judgment.

The man who suffers under prudence without wisdom, collects a vast body of disorderly facts which only serve to perplex his wearied understanding. That power of giving the best advice on sudden emergencies, and of conjecturing with felicity about future events, which the historian ascribes to Themistocles, and which might have been ascribed to Cæsar, and perhaps to Buonaparte, is mainly to be attributed to their avoiding these opposite errors of foolish prudence and imprudent folly.

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The warmth of his friend's heart is the last thing of which a wise man is certain ; but the first thing a fool is sure to discover and to boast of.

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We must often consider, not what the wise will think, but what the foolish will be sure to say.

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The self-love which Rochefoucauld discovers in all our actions, which, to use his own words, settles on external things, only as the bee doth on flowers, to extract what may be serviceable, is merely the condition of existence. Language has descended to us unprepared for the discussion of such a question as the followers of Rochefoucauld would press upon us. We are entangled in a web of words ; and when we begin to argue, we are but seeking refuge in the strongholds of the enemy. And why should we commence a fruitless investigation, in order to destroy a system which, unless the heart be indeed the dupe of the head, will never gain any abiding credence ?

The better order of mankind will always believe that

" . . . To live by law,  
Acting the law we live by without fear,  
And, because right is right, to follow right,  
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

And they will love virtue,

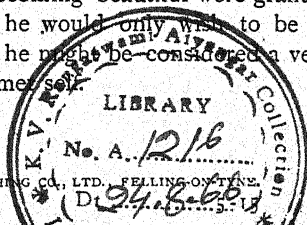
"Not as men value gold, because it tricks  
And blazons outward life with ornament,  
But rather as the miser—for itself."

Those who lament that it is impossible to do a purely disinterested action, may enjoy their lamentations in the society of those sages who would repiningly proclaim that the human eye is not quite achromatic; and that the moon might, for all earthly purposes, have been better placed upon the economical system suggested by Laplace.

The image that appeared to King Nebuchadnezzar in a dream was made of gold, of silver, of iron, and of clay. The idol of this world differs from that seen by the Babylonian monarch; for it is all gold—pure gold—and does not even possess the humanity of clay.

Few will at first be pleased with those thoughts which are entirely new to them, and which, if true, they feel to be truths which they should never have discovered for themselves.

Perhaps if the power of becoming beautiful were granted to the ugliest of mankind, he would only wish to be so changed, that when changed he might be considered a very handsome likeness of his former self.



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